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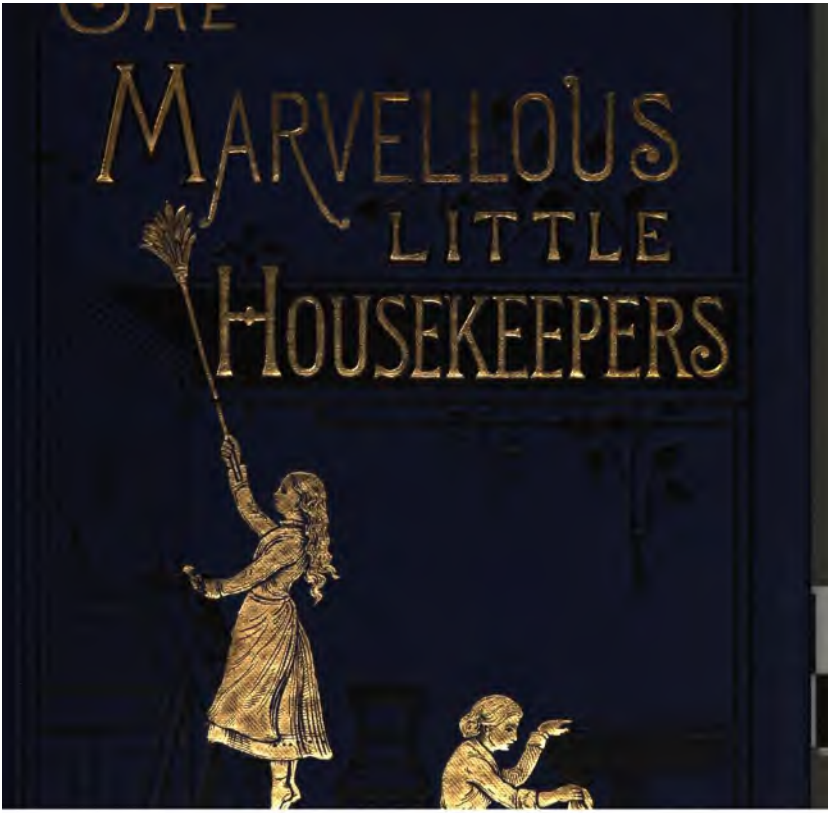
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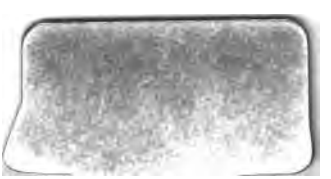

THE

MARVELLOUS LITTLE HOUSEKEEPERS.

K&E

THE

Marvellous Little Housekeepers:

WHAT THEY DID,

AND

HOW THEY DID IT.

BY

IDA JOSCELYNE.

"Industry is Fortune's right hand, and Frugality her left."
Old Proverb.

"You and Fidele play the Cooks."—*Cymbeline*, Act. iv.

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TO MY DEAR FRIENDS

Mr and Mrs Andrew Kohler,

OF SAN FRANCISCO,

A SOUVENIR

OF MANY HAPPY HOURS SPENT IN THEIR SOCIETY.

PREFACE.

FINDING, in my experience of daily life, that large numbers of young people are totally at a loss what to do in emergencies, or are all but wholly ignorant how to act in transacting the ordinary business of everyday life in a household when thrown on their own resources, I have endeavoured to provide for them, in the following pages, a little handbook that shall be, if followed, of great use, supplying as it does many valuable hints, recipes, and suggestions in the form of a continuous narrative. At the same time it is intended to stimulate the reader to self-reliance, readiness, and the desire to obtain such know-

ledge as will result in greatly increased usefulness in after life; and I place my "Marvellous Little Housekeepers" in the hands of my readers with the hope that it will be as profitable to them to read as it has been a pleasure to me to write.

November 18, 1879.

The Marvellous Little Housekeepers.

CHAPTER I.

"THERE goes the postman, mamma; I will run and see what letters there may be this morning," said Kathleen Everard to her mother, as she hastened from the room to get to the hall before Nancy.

She soon came back with a square envelope in her hand, exclaiming, "It comes from Eastham, but it is not Uncle Edgar's writing."

Mrs Everard broke the seal and read the following note from her brother's doctor: "Dear Mrs Everard,—I am extremely sorry to tell you

that Mr Llewellyn met with an accident yesterday; he was thrown from his horse, his right leg is broken, and he himself is much shaken. He is anxious you should come to him, and I consider good nursing indispensable; for with it in a month, he will, I trust, be far on the road to recovery. He proposes sending Nora to keep her cousin company, and in the meantime trusts you will not delay your arrival."

Poor Mrs Everard needed no second asking. She prepared her trunk; and when her husband came home to dinner, he immediately urged the importance of her presence at Eastham, adding, "You may be quite easy about me, dear, for with two such able housekeepers as you propose leaving me, I shall be taken care of and thoroughly spoiled."

That same evening Mrs Everard started, and

the next morning Nora Llewellyn arrived. She was an intelligent bright little girl of twelve, who had lived with her parents in France for several years; it was there she lost her mother. She was highly delighted to come and stay with Kathleen. The two were fast friends and very nearly of the same age; and once together, it is impossible to imagine all the delicious things they proposed making for Uncle Frank.

The first day was to be spent in looking round the house and garden, and in getting Nora's clothes neatly arranged in her drawers. The second, which was the first of July, was to commence business; and they intended noting down all they did to tell Mrs Everard what they had done each day during her absence.

"You are the elder, Kathleen, and must be the mistress to-day; afterwards we will take it in

turns if you like, and each of us must try and find out or remember some nice receipt for our respective days."

"You will be the French cook, Mademoiselle Nora, and I the English; papa is always ready for little delicacies."

The two girls were chattering busily in the breakfast-room when Nancy came in to tell Miss Kathleen it was quite time to decide what they were to have for dinner, and also adding, "You know, Miss, your mamma had a fowl killed yesterday for to-day."

"All right, Nancy," said Kathleen. "Come to the kitchen with me, Nora dear, we will go and arrange about it at once. It is ironing day. Nancy can go on with her work, and leave the dinner to us."

The famous housekeepers had soon put on

their cooking aprons, and with their sleeves tidily rolled above their elbows, set to work. Kathleen knew quite well how to prepare fowls. Her father generally liked them stuffed; but as she had only new bread she could not very well crumble it, besides, it was late, so she ran out into the garden and cut a nice little bunch of lemon thyme; that she washed and tied up, then dipped it in pepper and salt, and with a good bit of butter slipped it into her fowl ere she sewed it up.

"Ah! ah!" said Nora, "that is an excellent idea for those who like the flavour; it is so easy to do, and must make delicious gravy."

"Indeed it does," said Kathleen, "and if there is any of it left to-morrow morning we will have it for breakfast, and call it 'savoury butter.' I am so fond of it, and, you know, no grand housekeepers stuff fowls now-a-days; we must

keep an aristocratic table for papa, and not let him say we are poor, little, meagre, ignorant housekeepers. The fire is bright; let us put our fowl down at once and baste it well. I am sure you will say it is good when you taste it. You know papa will not be at home to-morrow, so we will keep the giblets all prepared with a little pepper and salt over them, and you must cook them French style for us."

"I used to be fond of them in Paris," said Nora, "and I will show you how I do them to-morrow; but what else have we to prepare for dinner?"

"Why, some potatoes to be sure; look what fine kidneys we have, and out of our own garden too."

After having scraped and washed about a dozen, they set them on the fire to boil in plenty of cold water, and Kathleen was going to

throw some salt into the saucepan, when Nora stopped her.

"Not now," she said; "wait till they are cooked and you will see what dry mealy potatoes we shall have for dinner. We must succeed in all we do to-day, or Uncle Frank will give us notice to quit the cooking department before he knows half how clever we are."

"We have nothing more to do now till all is cooked. Mamma has left us plenty of pastry, and, with some cheese, our dinner will be quite complete." So saying, they ran off to lay the cloth.

Uncle Frank was to be seen coming up the garden walk as Kathleen dished her fowl and poured the gravy into a sauce-boat, while Nora strained every drop of water from her potatoes, sprinkled a little salt over them, and held them

over the fire for several minutes, shaking them gently to dry out all the steam and prevent them from burning, ere she turned them out into a nice hot dish.

They had finished their operations, taken off their aprons, washed their hands, and were in the dining room, when Mr Everard entered and found his dinner ready.

"This is splendid exactitude," he said, as he kissed the little girls and took his seat. "Why, what has Nancy been thinking of to have cooked this fowl so beautifully. How delicious it smells too, and as to her potatoes, they are perfect, dry, and floury, just as I like them: it is a pity mamma is not here. She always complains of Nancy's careless cooking, but she could not say one word against it to-day. She has turned over a new leaf; and I hope she means continuing the improvement, for

I do not know when I have enjoyed my dinner so thoroughly."

The little girls looked at one another and smiled, but said nothing, until Nancy coming in to change the plates, answered her master's inquiry by exclaiming, "Bless you, sir, it's the young ladies that did it all, and I hope their new-fangled ways has not spoiled it."

"Indeed no. I wish you would copy them, on the contrary, for you never cook half so well."

Poor Nancy retired, mumbling, "All them Frenchy ways is only good to make discontented stomichs. I hate Miss Nora's new inventions, and won't have anything to do with them."

"You have begun so well, my dear children, that I hope you mean to continue; you should not have begun if you did not mean to go on, for

muttering Nancy's dinners won't suit me half so well," said Mr Everard.

Kathleen and Nora were enchanted with such well-merited praise, and never did two more delighted little girls put on their hats and scamper into the garden in the afternoon than they, when they went to collect the petals of all the white lilies they could find to put into bottles with sweet almond oil in case of burns.

"Directly you burn yourself you must put on a compress of them with plenty of the oil, and wrap the place up well, so that the air may not get to it. It will heal very quickly without any scar, at the same time taking the pain almost entirely out," said Kathleen. "We must put some of the petals in brandy too, in case of cuts and bruises; mamma gives a lot away."

"I remember in France," Nora added, "that

as soon as ever we burned ourselves, without breaking the skin, we used to take some powdered charcoal and spread over it; it smarted for a second or two, but all the fire was drawn out at once. It was an easy and convenient remedy, for there every one has charcoal in her kitchen."

The little girls were so busy and happy working away that tea-time came all too quickly, and bed-time also. Instead of going to sleep at once they lay chattering over their projects for the next day until it was quite late, and they heard Mr Everard come upstairs. Then they said good-night, and were soon sleeping as sweetly and calmly as possible, intending to be up early in the morning, for they had often heard very wise people say that it is "the early bird that catches the first worm!"

CHAPTER II.

COMING downstairs the following morning, they heard a poor woman lamenting over the sore throat from which she continually suffered.

"I don't know what to do for it," she said. "I wake up with it every day. Yesterday I gargled with some vinegar, but it did me no good. I've been to the doctor about it; he gave me a potion that cured me for some time, but it is too dear, I can't afford to get any more of it, and it is most miserable."

"Let us go and tell her that we can prescribe a very easy remedy for her, and one that will cost nothing, since Nancy can just as well put on one side the cold tea that remains after breakfast and

tea; it will soon cure her, I can assure you!"

"What, tea cure a sore throat?"

"Certainly, only it must be pure black tea, with which she ought to gargle night and morning, on going to bed and getting up. Those who have a tendency to sore throats have only to follow regularly this prescription, and they will not suffer any more."

"Well done, Dr Kathleen, when I am ill I shall come to you for a consultation, provided it be gratis, for I am not rich enough to pay you a heavy fee."

The poor woman was very thankful to the clever young ladies, and went off well pleased with a bottle of her medicine, promising to come back for more as soon as it was gone.

Uncle Frank had heard the whole of the con-

versation, and when they came in to the breakfast-room, told them how glad he was they had done good to poor neighbour Gamby, for she was a hard working woman, and deserved help: whereupon he gave them each a shilling to buy her some little useful article with, and the cousins' joy was very great at the idea of again doing good to the poor widow.

It was the famous giblet day; so directly after breakfast they went to the kitchen—Nancy taking particular care to inform them at once, that "they need do none of their outlandish stuff for her."

They laughed heartily, and chose a nice clean stew-pan, into which they put a good bit of butter and the giblets, turning them well on all sides until they were lightly browned, when with a fork they placed them on a dish; while Nora made what she called her "roux" by sprinkling

gradually a table-spoonful of flour into the butter, stirring it all the time most scrupulously until it was brown also, after which, slowly, she poured a certain quantity of water into it, calling out to Kathleen, "Stir, stir well,—don't stop until I tell you;" which she did, when she had about a pint of rich looking gravy. She then replaced the giblets in the pan, with pepper and salt, a little bouquet composed of one bay leaf, a nice piece of thyme, and some parsley, and a good quantity of onions, letting the whole boil gently for nearly three hours, after which she pared some potatoes and put on the top of all, saying, "You see how simple and easy it is. They are fowl giblets, so I put potatoes; had they been duck or goose, I should have replaced them by turnips cut in rather small quarters."

"Thanks for your lesson, Nora dear," said her

cousin; "it gives me appetite only to smell it. I am sorry papa is not here; I am certain he would have liked it."

Dinner time came at last, and the stew was pronounced excellent by the two housekeepers. Nancy had deigned to make them a rice pudding, which she declared much more wholesome than all their spiced rubbish. "Why! she'd rather eat bread and cheese all her life, than make such fussy things all perfumed with them scented herbs."

"Let her say what she likes," said Kathleen; "she's old and old-fashioned, and nothing will ever change her now, so it is useless to vex her, and after all, what does it matter? Not one bit; and 'hunger is the sauce' she seasons her aliments with, it seems to me, poor old creature."

"By-the-by, Kathleen, have you any elder trees growing near here?"

"Not close, but we can easily go and find some this afternoon, if you wish; but what are you going to do with elder trees, for I cannot promise you that there will be either flowers or berries on them just now?"

"You know, Kathleen, it is my turn to discover some useful receipt for to-day, and I will show you when we have found the elder trees what I am going to do with them; so come along, let us take our hats, and be off at once to the place you imagine the most likely to find any. I fancy there are some at the far end of the field we call the 'Great Ley,' and if not there we will go on to 'Golden Dean.' I am sure there are plenty there, and in lots of places nearer, if I could but remember them."

The little girls soon arrived at the spot indicated, and busied themselves in gathering a

number of branches from the elder bushes, which they carried home, Kathleen exclaiming, "Why, Nora, how strange! we were awfully tormented by the flies coming, and now they do not come near us, look! not a single one approaches us."

"It is perfectly true, dear; and the elder is such a powerful protection against flies that I am going to place some close to the windows, and neither gnats, moths, nor flies will come in. We will put a good bit also against the safe, and even a few leaves inside, for the elder is perfectly wholesome and a corrective of bad smells, such as proceed from fish and meat in hot weather."

"What a good thing to know, Nora. How came you to hear of such a lot of excellent recipes? I am terribly stupid by the side of you."

"Pray don't say that, Kathleen; I only know what poor mamma taught me."

Uncle Frank came back at eight o'clock, and was highly interested listening to what his little housekeepers had done. He considered them so clever, that he declared there was one thing he should like very much, if they could find some way of helping him, and that was, to rub up the heavy mahogany furniture in his office. "It looks so dingy," he said, "I am ashamed of it. Nancy never does it well; she always puts on a lot of turpentine or some such thing that nearly stifles me for days after."

The young girls said they would try and find out something, and, kissing Mr Everard, they went upstairs to bed, and were soon asleep, ready to awake with the sun; for, as the good fairy in one of their tales told them,

"Morning is welcome to the industrious."

CHAPTER III.

KATHLEEN and Nora were vastly preoccupied, trying to discover what would make the office furniture look like new, and yet leave no disagreeable smell afterwards.

They thought and thought, they chattered, then talked as gravely as staid old matrons; they put on their thinking caps, and tried and tried to remember or imagine some furniture polish, but alas, all in vain!

How could they disappoint Mr Everard, who had set his heart on having bright shining chair frames and bureau, instead of the dull, dusty ones that displeased him? besides which, they had

undertaken the task, and how galling it would be to have to avow their ignorance. His opinion of them would change at once, that was quite certain; he would no longer believe them skilful as little fays. They were in a regular maze, and so they went downstairs the following morning in a state of disagreeable perplexity. Nancy could not and did not try to help them; on the contrary, she chuckled over the idea that such very clever housekeepers should be caught.

"What shall we do?" said Kathleen despairingly.

"I do not know," said Nora; "let's ask for time. Uncle is not yet down, so meanwhile we will go and cook his eggs for him. Nancy has some splendid, fresh, thick cream, and we can give him something new for his breakfast this morning. How many eggs does he generally eat?"

"Never more than two."

"Well, then, this little enamelled plate will be just the thing. It will hold four—one for each of us at the same time;" so saying, she put a piece of butter into her dish, set it on the stove, and when the butter was hot broke four fresh eggs into it, sprinkled them with pepper and salt, and when sufficiently cooked, poured a few table-spoonfuls of the cream over them, leaving it a second or two to let it warm, but that was all. She heard her uncle coming downstairs, and ran into the breakfast room to serve him his eggs quite hot, while Kathleen poured him out a cup of smoking coffee.

"What is that?" he said to Nora, as she asked permission to help him; "another good invention, I guess, Mrs Cook." And when he had eaten a few mouthfuls, he went on, "It is simply

delicious, and delicate enough for a queen. They who live in farm-houses, and have all the ingredients at hand, are wrong not to offer it to their guests and themselves often. Nora, Nora, my love, you are spoiling me, and my Kathleen too," he continued, looking smilingly towards his daughter.

"Indeed, papa, Nora is clever. Fortunately she teaches me to make some of her good things; and though I shall never do them half so well, yet I will try and remember them and do my best, when she is not here."

"Uncle, I only know how to do little things of no importance, while Kathleen excels in much more serious and difficult work."

"You can teach one another in that case, my dear children. By-the-by, have you yet found some way of doing my furniture?"

The little girls blushed, and said neither yes nor no. They simply asked their uncle to be kind enough to wait until the next day; an arrangement that suited him admirably well, as he would be from home, and they could consequently have the room all to themselves.

For dinner that day they had a roast leg of mutton, of which Kathleen undertook the cooking, poor Nancy having met with a slight accident. Nora was to make the onion sauce, and fry the potatoes. For the former she peeled six or eight good onions and put them in a saucepan to boil, and then busied herself with her potatoes. She put rather more than a pound of lard in the frying pan on the stove, and when it was quite boiling and began to smoke, Nora threw very gently into it a plateful of potatoes, that she had

washed, pared, and cut into long thin slices. She took particular care not to put them in quickly, lest the grease should overflow and splutter all over the stove. Once in, she let them fry for a minute or two, and then took them out with her slice and left them to get cold on a dish. She placed her frying pan with the grease in it on one side and ran off to see Nancy, who had sprained her ankle severely that very morning, and could scarcely move, so great was the pain. The poor creature was grumbling away famously when Nora arrived to comfort her, while Kathleen made a lotion for her, composed of one ounce of spirits of turpentine and two ounces of spirits of ammonia. She consented at last to try the remedy, rubbed her ankle well, and actually avowed it had done her a great deal of good and eased her pain almost instantly.

Their visit to Nancy accomplished, the housekeepers returned to the kitchen.

The onions were cooked, so Nora pressed all the water from them and passed them with a wooden pestle through a colander back into the saucepan, adding pepper, salt, and a good piece of butter, after which she left them to keep warm, while she replaced her frying pan on the fire, and let it heat until the lard finished hissing and seething, and grew quite still and scalding. She then slipped her potatoes back into it for about a quarter of an hour, after which she sliced them out so as to leave no grease clinging to them, sprinkled them slightly with salt, and showed to Kathleen the very daintiest dish of vegetables one could wish to eat. She turned her onion sauce into a dish, in which she had previously beaten up the yolk of an egg, stirred it well round, and

carried her two dishes to table, just as her cousin took into the dining-room her mutton and hot plates.

As usual, Uncle Frank enjoyed his dinner amazingly. The meat was cooked to perfection; he had never in his life eaten such good onion sauce; and as to the potatoes, why they were real *pommes-de-terre soufflées*, such as he had delighted in in the best restaurant in Paris.

"I am sorry," he said, "poor Nancy cannot help you; how is she?"

"Much better, uncle," replied Nora, "since Kathleen has made her a lotion. We must run and carry her dinner to her now;" and so saying they disappeared.

Nora told Kathleen afterwards, that if she had had some good olive oil to mix with her lard her potatoes would have been still better.

"May I take this great stone preserve jar and put my grease in?" she asked, "for it will be nicer still the second time, and will serve again and again. In France they never wash their frying pans; they wipe them out with a piece of paper or rag to take off the worst grease and then rub them well with a cloth, so that the pans are never rusty, but always slippery and bright, ready to make omelettes and all sorts of good things. When they take them down for use they warm them a minute, and rub them inside for fear of dust; and I can assure you one of their French frying pans is worth a dozen of your old rusty English ones."

The rest of the day passed happily and quietly by. The only trouble was, how best to polish the furniture; but both Kathleen Everard and Nora Llewellyn remembered that,

"If none endeavoured there would be an end to discovery."

CHAPTER IV.

KATHLEEN started up in her bed early the next morning exclaiming, "You will never guess, Nora dear, what I have been dreaming about."

"No, indeed," said her cousin; "we often dream such ridiculous things. I have had a regular nightmare nearly all night. Great, dim, dusty chairs were crowding around and shutting me in, in an immense sort of hall. They seemed calling upon me to rub them up brightly. I had not, and could not find, the shadow of a duster or anything else, or I might have tried. Do all I would I could not get away from them. I crept round everywhere to find some little place to slip through, but all to no purpose.

I tried to scream, and at last managed to give one such yell that I woke myself up, and was thankful I did, though I am afraid I must have disturbed Uncle Frank with my stupid raving."

"Yours was a tormenting dream anyhow," said Kathleen, "but mine was an agreeable and useful one, as you will presently judge for yourself. I was in a dear little bright morning room, looking at lovely cabinets and all sorts of pretty things; the window opened on to a luxuriant garden filled with beds of the gayest flowers, that I stood admiring, when all at once, from out of a mass of geraniums and heliotropes I heard a wee, wee voice singing,

'Where there's a will there's a way;
So we will never, never, never say nay!'

Gradually the voice grew nearer and nearer, until the tiniest and most perfect little fairy settled

down on a china cup, and stretching out her emerald wand, said, 'You are an industrious little maiden, and so I've come to tell you how to clean your father's furniture and make it shine as brightly as the things around you.

"'Take a juicy lemon, squeeze all its juice into a cup, and then add to it one-third of the quantity of olive oil; beat the two well together, saturate a bit of flannel with the mixture, and then rub the furniture well, over a rather small surface at a time, until thoroughly cleansed from all marks and dust. Your cousin will follow with a soft cloth, taking particular care that none of the preparation remains, for it is easy to understand that in a very short time the dust would adhere to the oil, and, instead of brightening, the furniture would be dirtier than ever. You have, I hope, perfectly understood my explanation. I love

industry and purity, you see;' and thereupon, light Lady Fay blew a blast upon her ruby horn, and two brilliant dragon-flies bearing a gossamer scarf flew in by the window and settled down on a rose close to the fairy, who threw herself on to her airy couch and was wafted away to her kingdom, amid a chorus of bees that followed their queen and sang her their song of 'Hope and strive is the way to thrive.'

"I woke up very happy," said Kathleen, "when I had finished my dream; and as, Nora dear, we have lemons and olive oil in the house we may as well try this magic system: don't you think so? If it succeeds we shall always feel grateful to 'Lady Fay,' and live in hope that she will come again to help us when we get into difficulties."

"You are indeed a favoured creature to have received such an enchanting visit. I wish I could

boast of the like; but instead of 'Lady Fay' coming to see me, it seems 'Lady Lumber' set her heavy old chairs to bother and burden me."

"But it is late; so let us make haste down, for we have all the work to do this morning. Poor Nancy must not be allowed to get up,—I hope her ankle is better." Kathleen had scarcely said these words when they heard Nancy downstairs busy as usual. To their happy surprise she told them the lotion had done her so much good that she scarcely felt her sprain at all!

Finding they were not wanted, they ran out into the garden to gather and arrange some flowers. In picking some mignonette poor Kathleen got her hand stung by a wasp. She gave a little scream, and Nora, seeing what was the matter, rushed off to the house without saying one word. In a minute she was back with an

onion in her hand, cut crossways, and as soon as she was assured the sting was out, she applied it to the place; and a few seconds afterwards Kathleen declared, "She could scarcely believe she had been stung, for the pain had entirely disappeared."

"If I had had some fresh orange peel it would have done equally well. The oil that one can press out of it is good in all cases of stings or bites, when spirits of ammonia or alkali are not to be had immediately," said Nora. "In summer, poor mamma always carried a tiny blue bottle of alkali in her pocket, and frequently found it extremely useful."

That day the little housekeepers left the cooking entirely to Nancy, and set to work in good earnest, after breakfast, upon Uncle Frank's dusty furniture.

They swept the carpet with tea leaves, and

cleaned the room thoroughly, putting up snowy white curtains. The fairy's receipt produced an excellent effect. They tried it on all sorts of wood, such as walnut, rosewood, mahogany, etc., etc., and everywhere found it answered. They rubbed and rubbed away till their poor arms ached; they spared no elbow grease, and were well rewarded for their pains.

Mr Everard came home and found his dull chairs looking like new ones, and his bureau so bright he could almost see his face in it, and altogether his room so well finished and changed for the better that he gave a recompense to the industrious little housekeepers, asserting that, "as they liked such nice shining things he must give them each a bright new five shilling piece, as a sign of his satisfaction."

Kathleen and Nora told him their dreams, and

amused him greatly with their description of Lady Fay's visit, and the manner in which they overcame their difficulties in general, and, more especially, the way in which they had discovered how best to clean furniture.

After so much work they needed repose. Uncle Frank kissed them tenderly and sent them to bed early, the happiest little housekeepers imaginable; and truly, indeed, does the sage tell us, that

"The active mind enjoys the sweetest rest!"

CHAPTER V.

"WE must not forget," said Nora, as she stood looking out on the garden the following morning, "that the lamp glass 'flew' last night, and that there is not one in the house to replace it."

"No," answered her cousin; "and the most tiresome part of the affair is, that we can only get very common ones in the village, and it does so annoy papa when we cannot light his office lamp."

"Even if the village glasses are ordinary, we can surely do with one of them until to-morrow."

"Certainly we must be satisfied with one of them, only the trouble is, they almost always 'fly.'"

"If that be the difficulty, Kathleen, we

will try an experiment I have often heard of, and that is, to put the glass into the long boiler filled with cold water, and then place it on the fire until the water boils—it is said, when so boiled, the glass is not liable to 'fly' afterwards."

"We can but try it," said Kathleen; and effectively the common village glass did good service that night and many, many others. In consequence, the receipt was written down upon their list of good ones.

An hour after the above conversation a discussion as to dinner took place, and Nora said, "I believe I saw a little cold fowl downstairs. It is wasteful to let it be lost, and so we may as well make use of it. There is only very little, but 'waste not, want not' is a good proverb! We are, besides, to have a beefsteak and some fried potatoes, you say; these latter I shall do simply to-

day, that is to say, fry them at once without any bother. For my part I think them just as good. I will warm my grease a little wee bit earlier than is necessary for the potatoes; then beating up an egg, I stir flour enough into it to make a paste with either a drop of milk or water, and having cut my fowl into little slips, and seasoned the pieces, I dip them into the paste and throw them one by one into my boiling grease, until they are of a light brown; then serve them piled round on a dish, and decorate with double parsley. A very little meat makes a great dish of them, and almost any kind of the former will do, though fowl is perhaps the better."

"I am going into the garden, Nora; can I bring you anything?"

"Please, dear, a good quantity of parsley to begin with, for I want some to chop very fine for

my beefsteak; a good piece of butter, with some pepper and salt, and chopped parsley must be put into the oven for a few minutes before my beefsteak is quite cooked, for I mean to serve it French style."

"By-the-by, Nora, papa said yesterday he would like a good salad to-day. There are some splendid lettuces in the garden; shall I gather one?"

"Yes, please, and a little bunch of chives and pimpernel; for this latter improves the taste of lettuce immensely."

"So far so good," said Kathleen, as she came back a few minutes later laden with her commissions, "but we must put some oil and vinegar into the cruets; and I declare the oil bottle is dirty. How tiresome! wash it as I will, I can never get it clean and nice."

"Never mind, dear, I believe I can help you. Wait a minute till I run down into the cellar to fetch something."

A second after she came back with a basin of sawdust; and, asking Kathleen to come and pump for her, ran into the yard, filled her oil bottle with sawdust, shook it well, and rinsed it with cold water; and a clearer, cleaner cruet never was procured with so little trouble.

"Another good lesson, Nora, darling," said Kathleen, kissing her cousin affectionately.

The salad was soon prepared; the chives and pimpernel, cut very fine, were sprinkled over it; and only the work that must be done at the last remained. The two cousins were sitting talking, when the gardener came to the door with a basket.

"Please, Miss, master wants you to pack this

salmon-trout and grouse, that I may take them back to the station directly; they are for Mr Llewellyn."

"Very well, Thomas, we will call you as soon as they are ready. In the meantime, you will do well to go home and get your dinner," said Kathleen; "it is just twelve."

"How kind of Uncle to think of dear papa!" exclaimed Nora. "He will be pleased; he is so fond of fish and game, and we have so much trouble to get them at home."

"The only difficulty will be, perhaps, to pack them so that they will be fresh on arriving at their destination."

"That is an easy matter. We have only to procure some old iron, and put a piece on each side of the salmon before covering it in grass and cabbage-leaves; and as to the grouse, why, we

will stuff a little piece of charcoal into their beaks and down their throats, and then tie their necks round tightly. They will keep well so, you may be quite sure."

The packing operation once accomplished, Thomas was despatched to the station ; and when Uncle Frank came home at two his dinner was ready. He liked Nora's way of doing up cold fowl, and enjoyed his beefsteak, fried potatoes, and salad most thoroughly.

Nora thanked him for having thought of her father, and Mr Everard said, "How can I do otherwise when his daughter is such a kind and attentive little housekeeper for me ?"

The two cousins were delighted with the praise Uncle Frank was ever so ready to give, and in truth it was well merited, for they did

all they possibly could to make him comfortable and happy in Mrs Everard's absence.

That very evening he came home with a slight cold, and the little girls left him no peace until he allowed them to prepare him a good grog, or an egg beaten up with plenty of sugar and boiling milk poured on it. He chose the latter beverage, that the French call "Un lait de poule," and the following morning all trace of his cold had disappeared.

When Kathleen and Nora went upstairs that same evening they were very happy, for the afternoon post had brought excellent news of Mr Llewellyn. Mrs Everard's intelligent nursing was doing wonders, and she expressed herself perfectly easy about Uncle Frank, knowing in what kind little hands she had left him.

The young housekeepers were not long in bed

ere they were asleep. They had worked well that day, and had thoroughly felt the merit of the adage that says—

"The highest happiness is to be good, and to do good."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning the little girls were out betimes in the garden, enjoying the fresh air, one of the most active stimulants against idleness. The sweet-scented flowers, still loaded with the early dew, and the songs of the birds, filled their hearts with joy and gladness; and I do not believe that those young girls could have been led to commit a bad action, either in thought, word, or deed, for they were drinking in lessons from nature, the most powerful teacher that God has given, alike to the rich and to the needy, to instil into our hearts good and healthy principles.

"What splendid endive!" said Nora; "it is a pity Thomas has not tied up some of the heads to

whiten. We will ask him to do so ; and as to-day we have roast beef, I might make a dish for dinner. I am certain Uncle will like it. It is true it is more of a winter vegetable, but I think it good at any time when there is meat with gravy. Let us take three heads, Kathleen dear, for it reduces very much in cooking ; it does not signify how green it is, provided it boils a long time. We will run and wash it, and put it into cold water with a little salt, all ready to put on the fire."

"I do wish," said Kathleen, "our garden was not so infested by such horrible slugs and snails ; all our strawberries this year were covered with them, and they are so disagreeable."

"I will tell you of the plan our old gardener employed in France. He said it succeeded admirably ; and he told the truth assuredly, for we got rid of nearly all of them. He used to keep some

fresh butter until it was quite rancid, and then he would gather a quantity of young cabbage and lettuce leaves; these he put into the oven until they were soft. At other times he would employ them at once, but he always spread over them his rancid butter; after which he placed them at night at equal distances in his strawberry beds, and at the places he knew principally frequented by his enemies. The process answered well, for the leaves were positively covered with the repulsive creatures. The great precaution necessary was the visiting of the traps very early, to destroy them ere they crept away on their daily travels."

As the young girls entered the house half-an-hour later, Nora asked, "Do you think Uncle would like an omelette for his breakfast, Kathleen?"

"Very much, Nora; there is only one sheep's kidney in the house, and it is so little, all alone. Let us go and see about it, for it is close upon eight."

"I hope Nancy has not used my frying pan since I left it so bright and slippery the other day!"

Kathleen cut up the kidney into small thin slices and fried it in butter, after which she added a drop of ketchup and put it in the oven to keep warm, while Nora beat up the eggs with a little pepper and salt, wiped her pan well round, put in a small piece of butter, and waited until it was hot, when she poured in her eggs, letting them cook quietly for a minute ere she took a fork and kept drawing them towards the centre of her pan, at the same time shaking this latter gently to see that they were not burning to

the bottom, and would slide out easily on to her dish, on which she slipped half only of the omelette, keeping the other half resting in her pan, while Kathleen emptied her kidney on the side in the dish, after which Nora turned the rest of the eggs over the kidney, and the omelette was perfect, both in look and form.

Uncle Frank had a delicious omelette, and one that he liked much better than if the kidney had been cooked at once with the eggs, or grilled by itself.

For an hour or two that morning the little housekeepers sat out in the garden mending their stockings. It was not, perhaps, the work they would have chosen of all others, but they were far too industrious to put stockings on with holes in them; besides which, they remembered their grandmother's old and favourite saying, "that one

stitch in time always saves nine;" they were sure she was quite right, and were much too intelligent managers not to prefer the one early stitch to the nine troublesome ones that were sure to follow.

Their work finished, they went indoors to look after the endive. It was quite cooked. Nora pressed all the water from it in a colander, and then turned it on to a clean chopping board, and chopped it quite fine, after which she put it back into the saucepan with plenty of butter, and saw that it was properly seasoned. It was served like greens; and with good roast beef gravy over it, was declared to be a very, very nice vegetable.

That afternoon the little girls employed in looking out and destroying the ants' nests, with which the lawn was covered. The process they employed was simple and effective. Covering the places infested with quicklime, they washed it in with

boiling water. Then Mr Everard came home and heard what they had been doing. He was very glad, for the ants were becoming a perfect nuisance, and entirely spoiled the green velvety lawn.

It had been a broiling hot day, so after tea they were very pleased to go for a little walk with their Uncle in the woods adjoining. They came home laden with hazel nuts and wild flowers. It was close upon nine and nearly bed-time. So they said good-night rather earlier than usual, and, asking Nancy for a can of warm water, went upstairs, taking two fresh eggs with them. Nora broke one into her washing basin, taking special care to use only the yolk. With this latter she rubbed the roots of her hair thoroughly, and then pouring a quantity of warm water out, she washed her head; the

water and egg producing one of the most cleansing, softening lathers possible, particularly good for the hair, and for the skin of the head. Kathleen did likewise, and was delighted with the manner, so entirely new to her.

They did not go to sleep at once, but lay talking of all sorts of things, wondering what they would find to do on the morrow.

"What a nice lot of nuts we found this evening," said Kathleen. "We will go nutting one afternoon if you like, Nora; it is pleasant to have a good provision of them in winter. Papa prefers walnuts, and our tree is loaded this year, so we shall be rich. It is too late now to pickle; besides, I believe mamma has still one great jar left."

"You know, perhaps, Kathleen dear, that the leaves of the walnut tree, when dry, make an

excellent decoction for destroying the vermin on dogs; indeed, a bunch of fresh leaves put into a kennel, and changed every eight days, produces the same effect, and does no harm to the animal, though it is very unhealthy to sleep under the shade of a walnut tree, and children should always be forbidden to do so. I remember that, in Paris, our laundryman used always to wash his horse's head with a decoction of walnut leaves to prevent the flies teasing him. It was indeed a necessary precaution, for in the hot weather, when the flies bit him, he used to kick most frightfully."

"What a lot you know about walnuts, Nora dear. I like to hear you talk; but I am beginning to get awfully sleepy, are not you?"

"Yes, good-night darling, sleep well!"

And sleep well they did, to judge from their

even, quiet breathing. They were healthy girls, both in mind and body; and the only physicians they had ever appealed to were

"Dr Diet, Dr Quiet, and Dr Merryman!"

CHAPTER VII.

"MISS KATHLEEN," screamed out Nancy the following morning, when she heard her young mistresses in the hall, "do come and see the splendid egg I've just brought in, for sure it's a double yolked one; the only pity is, it's cracked, and I cannot boil it for master's breakfast."

"Indeed you can, Nancy."

"And I should like to know how? it will all boil out and be quite spoiled!"

"Leave it to me to cook. I will come in in time to do it."

"Mighty clever, mighty clever!" muttered the old woman. "Eh! Miss Nora, don't you want that marrow bone cooked too?"

"Yes please, Nancy."

"Well then, I s'pose I'd best tie it up in a cloth, or the marrow will all be out in the water."

"I will show you how to hinder that," returned Nora. "Take some salt and spread it with a knife over the end or ends of your marrow-bone, just as you would spread butter on bread, only press a little harder." So saying, the girls ran off laughing, while poor Nancy grinned and declared, "She didn't believe a bit in all their cunning tricks; anyhow, we shall see when it's done," she exclaimed.

While they were out in the garden Kathleen and Nora took some cotton wadding, and, dipping it in oil, tied pieces of it round the stalks of the dahlias and the stakes that supported them, at about a foot from the earth. In this manner

they prevented their handsome flowers from being destroyed by ear-wigs. They had just finished in time to go in and look after the breakfast. Kathleen put some water over the crack on her egg, and then rubbed in some salt, ere she put it into the boiling water, and afterwards drew it out intact to take it to table.

Nora made a nice piece of hot toast, then took up the bone and showed Nancy how well the marrow had remained in it, after which she poured it out over her toast, and carried it in to her Uncle smoking hot. It was a very nice relish for him, and he appreciated it thoroughly.

For dinner that very day Uncle Frank sent home a lobster, and the two little girls made him a mayonnaise sauce to eat with it.

"How do you make a mayonnaise, Nora?" asked Kathleen.

"Very easily, as you will see, dear; but before commencing operations let us go and gather a few chives to put in it. Some persons like it better with them, and some without; but I think Uncle will prefer a few, provided they are chopped very fine."

When the skilful little housekeepers came back, Nora commenced business by breaking the yolk of a very fresh egg into a basin, and then stirred it round and round, always the same way, pouring, drop by drop, olive oil into it until it became a thick cream. She never ceased stirring until she had made at least half a pint of her cream, and then she added to it a little mustard, pepper, salt, vinegar, and her chives, and again gave it one good beating, ere she declared it quite finished. "People often do not succeed with a mayonnaise," she said, "because they are

impatient, and put the oil into the egg too fast at the beginning; and if once you miss it, then it is always a failure, nothing can save it."

"I think it is so nice," said Kathleen. "Mamma often talks of the delicious mayonnaise she ate at your house, and I am very glad that now I can occasionally make her one; you may be quite sure I will not spoil it by impatience."

That day after dinner Uncle Frank came into the house with a splendid peach in his hand. "It is the only one that is ripe," said he, "so you must divide it between you. Cut it just the contrary way to what you would a pear; give it a tiny twist, and you will separate it easily without losing any of the juice, Kathleen love!"

She did so, and found her father was right. "It is a capital plan, papa, for I always lose

the best part of the juice the other way," she exclaimed.

Uncle Frank went off and left the two girls chattering away gaily. They were, however, soon interrupted by Nancy, who came running in to tell them that a poor beggar woman had fainted at the door, from the extreme heat. They rushed out to the kitchen and found the poor creature stretched upon the floor. Bathing her temples with Eau de Cologne, they put strong smelling salts to her nose, and did all possible to bring her to. At last Nora called to Nancy, and asked her if she had not a little cold black coffee left from the day before?"

"I believe there is a little," said the old woman.

"Well then, give it me at once;" and Nora managed to get a little down the poor sick

woman's throat. It had a wonderful effect in bringing her to. In a very short time she was better, and able to tell the little girls of all her misfortunes. Her husband was sick and her little children crying for bread.

Kathleen and Nora were greatly touched by such true misery. They gave her a packet of their old clothes, a quantity of dripping, cold meat and bread, and made her take a comfortable dinner before going. She was so thankful, and they so grieved to hear of her distress, that ere she went, they decided upon giving one of the bright five shilling pieces Uncle Frank had given them for cleaning his furniture.

The poor woman's surprise and joy at such unexpected riches were a sufficient reward, for they could never have spent five shillings so satisfactorily on themselves. They had done

good, and that charitable action was recompensing them tenfold, by the inward joy and contentment it was giving.

Even poor Nancy had tears in her eyes as she quietly said, "Well I must confess you are uncommonly kind, generous young ladies; and with all your inventive notions and Frenchy ways, worth a great deal more than most of the fine misses. I aint forgot how you cured my ankle; and since you are here, I wish one of you would be good enough to tie a piece of string round my finger to keep the rag on it. I cut it this morning; it ain't much, but it is in the way."

Nora put a clean piece of linen, with part of a lily leaf soaked in brandy, on the cut, and over all a finger-stole, that she tied round. Kathleen offered to put her finger to keep the string from

slipping, but Nora said, "No, dear, it is not necessary, thank you. See here, make a double twist in your thread before ever you commence drawing it up, and it will remain quite tight of itself while you make a second knot."

"So it does, I declare," said Nancy. "Well, you be awful clever all the same, Miss Norey."

"As Nancy says, you know a remedy for everything, Nora, darling; I wish you could think of something to prevent my having such terrible chilblains on my hands in winter. I suffer frightfully with them, and they are a great nuisance."

"Nothing is easier, Kathleen. You have only to rub your hands well with lemon juice on going to bed. Of course, you must not wait until you have chilblains ere you commence; besides, you probably know that lemon juice makes

the hands very white, especially a frequent application. For chilblains on the feet they say it is an excellent thing to put them in the smoke of green wood. At any rate, it is very easy to try it. But see, Kathleen, here comes Uncle Frank with a gentleman,—let us go into the garden."

As usual, bedtime again came all too quickly for such industrious little housekeepers. They were, however, perfectly satisfied with their day, and formed many more new projects for the following ones. They intended getting up very early the next morning to go and try to find some mushrooms. Kathleen knew of a place where they grew; the principal thing was to get there before any one else, so they went to sleep as soon as ever they could, believing

"An hour in the morning worth two at night."

CHAPTER VIII.

At seven o'clock the next morning Kathleen came down stairs and put a saucepan with about a pint and a half of water on the fire; once boiling she scattered into it a couple of tablespoonfuls of fine tapioca with a little salt, and let it cook for a quarter of an hour; at the end of that time she poured it very gently, but quite boiling, into a soup tureen, in which she had broken the yolks of two eggs and put a good piece of fresh butter; she stirred carefully round the whole time she was pouring the tapioca, so as to mix the eggs well in. Once finished she called Nancy, and bade her take it round to Anna Ransome. It was the poor old woman's favourite soup, and a

very easy and delicate one too, as all those who have tasted it can attest.

Kathleen and Nora next occupied themselves in taking a large patch of iron mould out of a damask tablecloth; it was a new experiment they were trying, but it answered nevertheless. They squeezed some lemon juice into a silver spoon and held it over the gas until it was hot, and then soaked and rubbed the spot until the mark quite disappeared. Most people use salt of sorrel for the like operation, but as they had not any they were obliged to resort to other means.

Their next work was to rub up their aunt and mother's best knives, and many young lady housekeepers will assuredly be surprised when they learn with what they did them in order to give a perfect polish.

Taking some very very fine charcoal powder, or rather dust, that they passed through a hair sieve, they then used it, after their knives were perfectly clean, as knife powder, and I can assure you it would be difficult to find a set of knives in better order and polish than those then stored carefully away, so that Mrs Everard might find them ready for use as occasion should require.

"I am sure every one ought to have some charcoal in her house," said Kathleen; "it is good for so many purposes!"

"Yes," replied Nora, "for knife-cleaning, and the dust to sprinkle over burns; besides which, a piece introduced into the body of a fowl, a duck, or game, will preserve it for more than a week, and takes out the bad taste if it be high. Care should, however, be taken to tie

the throat tightly round to prevent the air from entering. When cooks are afraid their fish is not so fresh as it should be, they put two or three pieces under the strainer, and are sure afterwards of being able to serve their salmon or turbot as sweet and firm as if it had just been caught. Prepared charcoal powder in a glass of water after a heavy meal is an excellent thing for people who suffer from indigestion; and, last of all, charcoal is often used in water-filters, and renders the water much more pure and sweet. I have no doubt it is good for many other things, but I do not remember anything else for the moment."

"I think you have thought of an immense number of things already," answered Kathleen; "but as Nancy is busy this morning, I will go and fetch papa's lamp and prepare it ready for this evening."

"Yes, do, dear; only remember not to rub your glass with a cloth that has been near parsley or any other verdure, or it will certainly 'fly.' I do not even know if the boiling operation would save it. How many servants are the cause of lamp-glasses and gas-shades flying, and that simply from using a cloth to polish them that has been on the kitchen-table near vegetables or flowers!"

The lamp finished, they started out for a walk in the garden to see how the ants were getting on. These latter had all disappeared, or had left only behind them a great quantity of dead bodies; again their work had proved efficient, and they certainly could boast of being wonderfully successful in all they undertook.

As they passed under a large walnut-tree eldoad with fruit, Kathleen said, "You cannot

imagine how fond of walnuts papa is, only he does not care for them when once dry; so I have discovered a way of keeping them quite as fresh as when first gathered, and that for any length of time."

"Do tell me how you manage!" exclaimed Nora.

"I bury them in sand, and water them slightly once a-week. We always keep them in the cellar, and so they are no trouble at all."

"An excellent thing to know, Kathleen. You teach me quite as useful things as I do you. Between us we shall finish by discovering a whole host of receipts, and thereby be able to render service to many people. Writing everything down, as we do, we are sure not to forget; and I am certain Aunt Everard will approve of our so doing."

"What splendid onions! Are they not fine?" said Kathleen. "I do so like beefsteak and onions; it is a very vulgar dish, but a good one. After eating onions I chew a little parsley, and half-an-hour afterwards eat an apple; and I can assure you the disagreeable smell is thus removed."

"Do you like hard-boiled eggs, Kathleen?" asked Nora all at once.

"Very much."

"Well then, as Uncle is out, we might have some 'tripe eggs,' or, more elegantly speaking, some 'œufs à la tripe' for dinner. What say you?"

"Oh! I should like it above everything. I always enjoy your little French dishes, Nora!"

So saying the girls pulled a good quantity of large onions and ran into the house with them. They peeled and sliced them, and then fried them

in butter. In the meanwhile putting on some eggs to boil hard, when cooked they threw them into cold water to be able to take off the shells easily. Afterwards cutting them in quarters lengthwise, they put them into the onions with pepper, salt, and a drop of vinegar, and let them stew gently for a few minutes. Just before serving some persons add a little cream, a little milk, or a little white sauce; but Nora contented herself with them as they were, and Kathleen enjoyed them thoroughly. They ate their parsley and apples after, and when Uncle Frank came home he never said a word. So the young housekeepers flattered themselves that he did not perceive they had been eating onions.

"What have you done to your hat, papa?" said Kathleen that same day, "it looks so bad."

"Why, it got wet last night," said Mr Everard;

and although I brushed it well this morning it is none the better."

"Will you take another and leave it to me to arrange, Uncle?" said Nora.

"To be sure I will, Mademoiselle Skilful. If you succeed with my beaver I have a straw one to put under your care also, a real Panama."

"All right, Uncle; I will do my best to satisfy you, and thereby merit your confidence and custom on all future occasions."

Thus chattering, Nora ran away with the black hat. She brushed it very carefully, took a good piece of flannel that she heated very hot by the fire, and drew it round and round the hat, pressing pretty heavily. The lustre soon came back to the rebellious silk, and smoothing it thoroughly, she quickly ran back to the dining-room, holding up the hat in triumph, a perfect success!

Uncle Frank could scarcely believe his eyes!

"You are a first-rate hatter, Nora," he said, catching her to him and kissing her, and I shall be most happy to confide my straw hat to your especial care."

Nora picked off the black ribbons round it, and then was obliged to wait until she could go down the village to get some sulphur. An occasion soon offered itself, and when she came home she put half-a-cupful into some milk, took a nail-brush and brushed the hat all over vigorously with her preparation; after which, she went to the pump and pumped and pumped over it until all vestige of sulphur had disappeared. She left the hat to dry in a hand-basin just the size necessary to ensure a good shape, and the following morning put it out in the sun to dry. When Uncle Frank came home to dinner, she

presented him with his hat, white, clean, and nicely trimmed with its black ribbon. She naturally received a second share of thanks, and a second share of self-satisfaction, at having been useful to the Uncle she loved so well.

Another day had come and gone, and both Kathleen Everard and Nora Llewellyn felt they had spent it usefully and happily in giving pleasure to others, and, therefore, necessarily to themselves. They talked for a long time over all they would do, and would not do, when they should be grown up and have the entire command of a great house. They blamed many of Mrs Quaint's droll ways and untidy habits, they extolled Mrs Dapper's good management and intelligence in household matters. They admired also Mrs Mild's well-behaved and nicely brought

up children, while they detested Mrs Rough's unruly and ill-spoken boys.

Both of the girls could boast of having been brought up in integrity and industry, and they felt very grateful to their parents, knowing as they did that the wise man declareth that

"A good beginning makes a good ending."

CHAPTER IX.

As they were dressing the following morning, Kathleen complained of a slight toothache, and Nora said

"I remember poor mamma telling me, that the best way never to have decayed teeth, nor to suffer from toothache and neuralgia, from our earliest youth is, the first thing on waking in the morning to wipe carefully with a dry handkerchief from behind the ears the perspiration that naturally comes there during the night: often it is nearly imperceptible, yet, nevertheless, it exists more or less."

"I am not so young as I have been," said

Kathleen; "but the proverb says, 'Never too late to mend,' so I shall from henceforth carry out your prescription very punctually, Dr Nora."

"You are an excellent patient, Kathleen; you are always ready and willing to try all I tell you; invalids are often very stubborn people to deal with."

The dressing completed, they went down stairs to find poor Nancy in a very grumpy state of mind, and at last discovered that her disturbed temper arose from several severe attacks of cramp in her right leg during the night.

"I do pity you, poor Nancy," said Kathleen. "I never had but one and I thought my leg was broken. I screamed so lustily that I brought papa and mamma out of bed in a great hurry; they imagined I was being murdered."

"And what did you do to it?" asked Nora.

"Why, rubbed it very hard, to be sure."

"Well, if Nancy will try a very, very simple remedy that I can prescribe for her, she will never have cramp in her leg again, and that is, to wear continually under her stocking, just below her knee, a flannel list garter, turned round several times, though not tight enough to prevent the circulation. The continual friction it causes is a sure specific against cramp."

"I aint much faith in that, Miss Norey; but I will try it all the same."

Try it, unbelieving Nancy did, and more than a week after was obliged to admit she had not felt the least symptom of cramp since, though hitherto it had troubled her almost every night more or less.

"Truly I am in bad luck's way this morning!" said Kathleen, as she came running into the kitchen

exclaimed. "Please give me some water; my nose is bleeding so fast, and I cannot stop it."

"Put a key down her back, Miss Norey."

"No, no," answered Nora; "give me some clean white paper," and she cut a round piece out of it as big as a half-penny, and bade Kathleen stick it to the roof of her mouth.

The bleeding gradually diminished, and a few seconds after, stopped entirely; much to the satisfaction of the two cousins.

That afternoon Kathleen and Nora went nutting. They had a long way to go to the hazel trees, and it was decidedly warm and oppressive; regular stormy weather, without one breath of air. They succeeded in gathering an immense bagful. The question now was how to get it home, as the bag was very heavy. Having no choice, they must return as they had come, on

foot; and so they set out bravely, carrying the nuts by turns.

How thankful they were when at last they caught sight of their house through the trees. The road seemed interminable, but they took renewed courage at the sight of the familiar garden gate, and finally trudged into Nancy's department with their treasures, Kathleen calling out, "Please Nancy, give me something to drink, I am so hot and thirsty."

"Perhaps you would like a cup of cold milk, miss?" said the servant.

"Indeed she must not drink cold milk when she is warm, Nancy; nothing is so dangerous. Most persons imagine they can drink milk with impunity when they must not take water; they do not reflect that milk is much colder, and they quite ignore that it leaves very

often gangrenous spots on the lungs as it passes. Cold milk has frequently been the root of serious illness, that persons have ascribed to other causes. I do not mean to say it is not often an excellent and healthy drink; I merely tell you of its danger in certain cases. You do not perhaps know that turned milk, poured out at the root of a tree, will invariably kill it."

"In course I did not know all that, Miss Norey, and I am very much obligated to you for teaching me so many clever things. When I used to be a child cold milk never did me no harm, and people must have become much more delicate since my days not to be able to drink at their ease what our grandfathers and grandmothers indulged in, without having any of them stupid diseases you call by grand names, such as pulmonary affections and the like." Such

were Nancy's reflections and ideas on almost all things of which she was totally ignorant.

On going to bed, Nora found it was a large blister on her heel that had hurt her so much in returning from the nutting expedition. It was extremely tiresome, as she was going out again the next morning, and she felt she must do something to cure it, so quickly running downstairs for her work-box, she soon came back busily threading a fine needle with a piece of white thread.

"Are you going to sew a plaster over your heel?" Kathleen asked.

"No, dear, a remedy has just come into my head that I remember having read of many times. See!" she said, "I must not break the skin, or it will be ever so long healing. I shall simply pass the cotton through the blister, leaving about two inches hanging at each end all night.

Thus the serosity will find an issue, and to-morrow I shall be none the worse for my long walk to-day; indeed, I shall not feel it at all."

Soon in bed, and on the point of going to sleep, Nora asked in a low voice,—

"Are you asleep, Kathleen?"

"No, dear."

"Well, then, please tell me if there are not still in the garden a lot of tiny little green asparagus, too small to cut for a dish?"

"I believe there are, Nora."

"Then I shall get up early to-morrow morning and make Uncle an omelette aux pointes d'asperges for his breakfast; and now, good-night, darling. I am sorry to have disturbed you, but I wanted so much to know."

"Good-night, dear Nora, sleep well."

But the asparagus made Nora think of so many

other receipts, that her mind wandered from one to another, till she fully realized that

"One receipt is the basis of many others."

She called to mind a recipe for fruit jelly, that is delicious, and the first opportunity that occurred she made it. She took one ounce of Swinborne's isinglass (a quart packet of his gelatine will do as well), that she soaked in a pint of cold water; she added half-a-pint of red currant jelly, dissolved in half-a-pint of hot water, with four ounces of loaf sugar, and the juice and peel of a lemon. She stirred over the fire till dissolved, and then she strained all through muslin into a mould. Instead of currant jelly she could have used fruit syrup without sugar, or a pint of sweetened juice of fresh fruit, but the jelly was less trouble, so she used it, and excellent it proved to be.

CHAPTER X.

AT half-past six the next morning Nora was out in the garden busy gathering her asparagus. She could only find a small bunch of very tiny green heads, that most persons would not have taken the trouble to collect. She, however, carried them carefully in, washed them well, and boiled them with a little salt until they were tender, after which she scraped the heads off, fried them in butter, and beat them in with her eggs all ready for her omelette.

"If we had found enough," she said, "we could have made a little dish in the same manner, only instead of making them into an omelette, have served some hot lamb chops on them;

nothing is nicer and more delicate. I suppose you know that asparagus is one of the best vegetables, and most healthy. I have often heard of people being ordered to eat it every day as long as it is in season. It is excellent for the blood, and especially for all diseases of the kidneys, it is said; just, indeed, as celery is a capital remedy against gout and rheumatism. Cooked celery with white sauce, and the water it is boiled in, is often prescribed in such cases as well as uncooked celery.

An excellent celery soup is made with one pound of potatoes and a quarter of a pound of celery, cut small, two ounces of bread crumbs, one ounce of butter, one pint of new milk, one pint of water, and salt to taste. "Peel and boil the potatoes, then drain and mash them through a colander," said Nora, "while the celery is cooking

in a pint of water; when the celery is sufficiently done, pass it also through the colander back into the water in which it has been boiled, throw in the potatoes, the butter, and the milk, and boil the whole for fifteen minutes. Sprinkle the bread crumbs in five minutes before serving, so that they too may boil, and then serve in a hot soup tureen; for those who prefer a stronger flavour of celery, it is easy to cook rather more than a quarter of a pound. Nothing can be easier to make; and, for their good, you can never persuade gouty or rheumatic people to partake of this soup too often.

Kathleen and Nancy laughed while poor Nora stood expounding upon the merits of asparagus and celery. Nevertheless her cousin quite believed her, and noted all she said as worthy of being remembered.

Uncle Frank found his omelette delicious, an said, "It is a pity there is no more asparagus t be had, or he should have begged Nora to pr pare a dish of omelettes for another day!"

That same morning, observing what an immen quantity of roses was in full bloom, and ready fall, Kathleen told Nora she should so like make her mother some of her favourite toil vinegar ready for her return.

"We will do it at once, dear," she said; "l us go and gather all the roses we can."

"We shall not have enough of our own; b Mrs Beaks told us we might have hers, if only w would go and fetch them; and you know she h an inexhaustible supply."

"Supposing we gather our own first, and th go and collect the quantity wanting at our ki neighbour's," said Nora.

Preparing for the Rose Gathering.—P. 91.

And so it was agreed. When the young housekeepers had picked all they could at home, without destroying the good flowers, they ran to Mrs Beaks', and in a very short time came back with an immense basketful of petals of all colours.

Filling a very large water-pitcher with the rose leaves, they heated two quarts of common vinegar, and when quite boiling poured it over the whole, leaving it to infuse for a fortnight, after which it was passed through a fine muslin strainer and bottled. Nothing could be more odoriferous and refreshing than a little of this perfumed vinegar in the water they washed with. Mrs Everard always used it in preference to any other toilet perfumes, and when very thirsty would put a teaspoonful into a glass of sugared water to drink.

Kathleen and Nora also gathered a quantity of oak-geranium leaves, lavender, and other sweet-

scented plants to put into their linen drawers; they did not forget either Mrs Everard's linen press, or their uncle and father's handkerchief box, and they could scarcely believe their ears when Nancy came to summon them into tea and tell them that it was more than half-past six, and Mr Everard was waiting for them.

They were far from doing all they wanted that day; "but," as Nora said, "they had not lost their time, and consequently must not complain."

The first thing after breakfast the next morning, the little girls went down the village to see their old friend Anna Ransome, and took her some leek soup. They had boiled a quantity of the best part of the leeks, cut small, in a little water and salt, with a couple of potatoes; once sufficiently cooked, they had mashed the potatoes, added a good piece of butter, a little bread cut

very fine, and a pint of good milk, then boiled all up together for ten minutes ere they poured it into the old woman's can.

Even Nancy had deigned to taste it, and acknowledged "that when she got old she should sometimes make soup like that, for it was uncommon good and no messing with it."

Anna Ransome received her two kind young friends with joy, and was very thankful for the soup. She had no teeth, and consequently could eat very few things, therefore she liked soup and almost lived on it.

Going home, Kathleen and Nora met the wife of a farm labourer, who sometimes came to the house in the capacity of a charwoman. She had her little girl with her, a dear little thing, but the mother complained that, for sometime past, she seemed to be deaf, and was gradually growing more and more so.

"In that case," said Nora, "you will probably be able to cure her, as you say the deafness is recent, by dropping every morning, and for some little time, two or three drops of warm glycerine into the ear that is deaf; if that does not succeed it can do her no harm, and you can try afterwards some sweet basil juice—but this latter must be prepared by a chemist."

"Thank you, Miss," said the poor woman; "I shall be so thankful if I can cure the poor bairn without a doctor."

"If you will come to the house," Kathleen rejoined, "I will give you some glycerine. But what is the matter with the poor mite's hand?"

"Why, Miss, the cat scratched her this morning; she will play with it, and now it has finished by hurting her very much."

"Then you had much better come home with

us at once, Rebecca Cobins, and let us do something for the poor little thing. Nothing is more dangerous and long in healing than cat scratches."

"I am sure I feel very grateful to you, Miss, and I promise she shall play no more with the spiteful beast."

Once at home, Kathleen and Nora boiled a poppy head (without the seed inside) and a few flowers of camomile in some water for about half-an-hour, after which they bathed the little creature's hand well, and tied it up, telling the mother to come again after dinner to repeat the operation. This method succeeded in curing the scratches in a few days, without the least gathering, otherwise they would have ordered bread poultices.

Mr Everard's house was destined to be a real dispensary that day; Nancy begging the young ladies to try and find something for Tom Clark's

terrible cold and cough, but more especially for this latter, that kept him awake night after night, notwithstanding all the comforting things his wife Henrietta tried, to calm him.

"I believe," said Nora, "I have still some slippery elm, that I got from the American chemist, and with it I am sure of being able to make him a calming ptisan. I can get some Iceland moss in the village and some sugar-candy, and we have plenty of old brandy in the house."

That same morning they procured all they wanted, and spent their afternoon in making two quarts of it.

Nora commenced by throwing a good handful of Iceland moss into a saucepan of boiling water, and let it boil a few minutes, after which she threw away her first water, and put the moss she had thus washed, with an ounce or rather more

of her slippery elm cut into little strips, into a large, clean saucepan, that held at least five quarts of water; she put the whole on a bright fire, and let it boil several hours, until it was reduced to about two quarts, after which she strained it, put the liquid back into her saucepan with one pound of common yellow sugar-candy, and as soon as this latter was quite melted, she again strained it through a hair sieve, for fear of the bits of cotton, and, lastly, threw into it a brimming tumbler of her old brandy. She then bottled it carefully, and ordered the patient to take a glass of it warm night and morning.

"This excellent ptisan has been known to prolong the life and ease the patient marvellously in cases of consumption," she said, "and in tiresome, hacking coughs is infallible. It is true it is expensive, and must be continued for a certain

time, but how many spend their money for useless remedies, while others would give all they possess to do good to a poor, sick person?"

"That be true," said old Nancy, "and I bless you heartily for all your trouble. It did grieve me so to hear poor cousin Tom a-coughing as he did yesterday."

"We had better have tea the minute papa comes in, and then you can go and take him it," said Kathleen, "so that he may pass a calmer night."

"Thank you, Miss, God will he may."

"To-morrow we will have another French salad if you like, Nora," exclaimed Kathleen Everard, out in the garden, after tea.

"Yes, another lettuce one, so that we may put half a dozen seringa leaves and two or three of the flowers in it, to give a perfume of cucumber.

In endive salad we sometimes put, as a decoration, nasturtium flowers over it. Those who like them eat them, and those who do not leave them. I think the essential thing to have good salad is to put good oil, and plenty of onion chopped very, very fine, when there are neither chives nor tiny scallions to be had. Of course, all this depends on people's taste; some like one thing, some another; and it is no easy matter to content everyone. Therefore, as a rule, we should try and conform ourselves to simple things, serving little relishes separately."

"Come, my dears, come," called out Mr Everard from his study an hour later, "it is high time to bid me good-night. They say, 'Too much bed makes a dull head,' but moderation is the safest route to tread; and remember,

> 'Early to bed, early to rise,
> Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise!'"

CHAPTER XI.

KATHLEEN and Nora were standing in the kitchen looking at Nancy's new cap, when they heard a man crying "Mussels, fresh mussels."

"Let's buy some," said Kathleen.

"No, pray don't, Miss, for sure if you do you will be ill after them. A little time back neighbour Hardy got some, and was terrible sick all night."

"Don't fear, Nancy," said Nora, "there is a way of rendering them perfectly harmless and digestible. We will soak them in vinegar and water for an hour when they are clean, and then before cooking them wash them well in fresh water once again, and after that you may be quite easy —we shall have neither colic nor swollen heads."

The little girls laughed at Nancy's incredulity, and again proved her fears vain, for all of them partook of the mussels, Uncle Frank included, without the tiniest inconvenience.

"Whatever are all these lamentations about?" called out Kathleen to her cousin Nora that same morning.

"Why, dear, I have stained my hands frightfully, and I can't get them clean. I will not cut a fresh lemon expressly, and nothing vexes me more than to have dirty-looking hands. I have tried vinegar and all sorts of things, and I cannot go to table like that; do look."

Assuredly her hands were very yellow, but Kathleen only smiled at her tribulation, and, taking her by the arm, led her out into the garden. "It is my turn to be the sage this time," she said; and looking carefully round she

soon discovered and put into Nora's hands a bunch of sorrel leaves. "Now, go home, Miss, and rub your hands well with them and cold water, and don't make such a fuss about nothing another time."

Nora laughed heartily at Kathleen's science, and especially the way in which she portioned it out. Trying to be commanding and dictatorial were not natural features in the kind Kathleen Everard's character.

The next morning the cry was, What cakes can we make easily for the little Winkles whom papa has asked to tea? they are terrible gluttons, and if we make anything too rich they will be ill.

"I propose we give them some Zulus," said Nora.

"What are you talking about, Nora? why, you must be laughing!"

"Not at all, I shall make them some 'Zulus.' I tell you, we are sure to succeed with them. They are very good, very satisfying, and very respectable-looking, exactly the colour of their namesakes."

"Very well, we will go in for the 'Zulus,'" said Kathleen, highly amused.

Thereupon Nora placed her frying-pan on the stove, with about a pound and a-half of lard in it, and while it was heating she broke into a pan three or four eggs, with half-a-pound of well-washed currants, half-a-pound of crushed sugar, a little nutmeg, and as much flour as she could stir in to make a tolerably thick paste. By the time she had stirred it well, and added a teaspoonful of Borwick's powder, which she had forgotten (and which may be used or not, as the Zulu-maker likes), her lard was boiling and ready for use,

so she took a table fork, and with it dropped into her pan as much paste as she could conveniently take up at a time; not more than the size of a large walnut, however. When her pan was full, she let her Zulus fry until they were of a good light brown, then turned them, and finally took them up to make room for new ones. She very soon had an immense dish, that she piled up to the admiration of Kathleen and Nancy.

"I prefer them the second day," she said, "and they are convenient, for they will keep any length of time without drying, and the grease can be put by in a jar for another occasion, or used for potatoes."

Uncle Frank laughed heartily when Kathleen told him the history of Nora's cakes, and said, "it was a pity the little Winkles had not been in Caffreland; for, to judge by the havoc they made

among the Zulus, they would have been useful allies." Not only, however, were they partial to cakes, but ham, bread and butter, eggs, and preserves all followed the same road; and no one was surprised, when they had gone, that Nora said, in disgust—

"I cannot tolerate the greedy little things. Their mother must be a very weak-minded woman, and an enemy to her own children, to allow them to behave as they do."

"Papa does not like them either," continued Kathleen. "He invites them from time to time because he does a great deal of business with Mr Winkle."

From one subject to another the conversation suddenly turned on cold winter weather and cold feet. "Of course, you know, Kathleen, that the Russians often wrap their feet up in paper before

putting on their boots in very severe cold ; but I can tell you of an excellent and easy way that I have seen practised by some Canadian friends we had in the north ; and that was, when they were going for a long drive, and afraid of having cold feet, they used to put a little powdered mustard into their stockings, and were sure then of not suffering with frozen feet, let the journey be ever so long and ever so cold."

" That is an excellent thing to know, Nora, and I will persuade papa to try it this winter, when he is obliged to drive far."

" I wish you knew of something also that is good for corns, Miss Norey," said old Nancy.

" Well, they pretend that by rubbing your corns and bunions with the leaves and flowers of the honeysuckle, as long as you can get them, you will soon cure the worst. Others say that a piece

of lemon pulp, applied fresh morning and night, will also destroy them entirely."

"I will try it anyhow," said the old woman, "and if one don't do me no good, perhaps the other will."

That day there was nothing more to be done, for the little housekeepers were going out with Mr Everard. They declared, however, that they would rub up the silver the next day, and make it look like new.

Very welcome news had just come. Mr Llewellyn was wonderfully better, Mrs Everard was coming home in a few days, and Kathleen and Nora were to get all their things ready to start for Eastham, that they might keep Uncle Edgar company, and so prevent him missing his sister's society too much, ere he should be quite

strong enough to recommence his ordinary and daily occupation.

Truly and sincerely the youthful housekeepers from earliest childhood had learnt that wholesome maxim taught by the nursery lines that say,

> "Little deeds, like little seeds,
> Grow to flowers or to weeds."

Kathleen Everard and Nora Llewellyn had cultured the little deeds that bore goodly fruit, and were growing up with the firm conviction that

> "It is well to be a friend to virtue, and better still to be a stranger to vice."

CHAPTER XII.

ONE morning as the two little housekeepers were getting up, Nora happened to take Kathleen's sponge in mistake for her own. She had, however, scarcely put it into the water ere she exclaimed, "Oh, Kathleen, how disagreeable your sponge is; pray let us take it downstairs and wash it!"

"Nancy did it only a few days since, but it was nearly as nasty when she brought it back as when she took it."

"Then she did not wash it properly, or it would not have remained greasy."

"She washed it with soap and water, she said."

"Well, this morning we will soak it in buttermilk for a few hours and then wash it in clear

water, and it will remain clean for a much longer time, and be as good as new."

"Our brushes, too, will be none the worse for a good cleansing—what say you, Nora?"

"We will go in for a good wash for them likewise. Some persons wash them in cold soda and water; which is perfect, but if you do not want to spoil your brush, never rub it, and, above all, take care to dry it in a shady place, neither in the sun nor by the heat of a fire; give it time and you will be the gainer. As a rule, we wash our brushes at home simply with a few drops of ammonia in the water, and it is an excellent plan."

"We can choose to-day between the two ways," and Kathleen ran downstairs, singing gaily—

"Oh, dear, what can the matter be,
Johnny's so long at the fair," etc.

But she was soon stopped by Nancy's dismayed face and peevish voice, calling to her to come quickly and see what all their clever inventions had done. "You had much better have left them alone," she grumbled, long before Kathleen could get into the dining-room to see what terrible catastrophe had happened; "much better have left 'em where they were. They did no one any harm in the garden, and now they are a-scampering all over, and in the 'buffet,' as Miss Norey calls it. Oh dear! oh dear! what will missis say? we shall be eat up with them!"

Nora and Kathleen arrived almost at the same time, to discover that Nancy's desolation proceeded from an irruption of ants in the dining-room side-board. Nora burst out laughing, much to Nancy's indignation. "Why!" she exclaimed, "if instead of ants it had been an invasion of living

Zulus you could scarcely have put on a longer face, Nancy!"

"I wish you'd please not to make fun of me, Miss; you got 'em in, and you may get 'em out," she said, bundling out of the room.

Nora followed her into the kitchen, and, putting on a very sedate face, said, "Please, Nancy, keep the coffee-grounds after breakfast, they may be useful."

Nancy deigned no reply, though she put them religiously by until the cousins came to fetch them and put them on a saucer in the sideboard, whereupon the ants soon decamped, and took up their abode just outside the French window; from this last station they were despatched, by quicklime and boiling water, "into a land from whence no traveller returns."

Nancy did her best to find some poor straggler

still in the side-board, but, not succeeding, vouchsafed no remark whatever upon the ants' speedy exit.

That same day at dinner they had cold roast beef, with pickles; and Nora asked Kathleen if she knew of a good receipt for red cabbage?

"Oh, certainly, a very good one, and a very simple one.

"We take several red cabbages, choosing especially those that are hard, as soon as they have had a few good frosts on them, and cut them in thin rounds into a colander, sprinkling a pretty good quantity of salt between the layers; we leave them thus for forty-eight hours, taking the precaution to turn them each day, so that as much water as possible may run from them; at the end of this time we put them into a large stone jar and pour cold vinegar over them; in the mean-

time we boil, in about a pint of vinegar, half-a-pound of whole black peppers and cloves, with a good slice of cooked beetroot in it; that we throw over all when it has cooled a little. This last spiced vinegar should boil for a quarter of an hour, and I can assure you, Nora, it gives a much finer taste to the cabbage than a quantity of other spices, beside which, if properly done, your pickle remains crisp, and of a beautiful colour."

"Thanks, Kathleen dear. As you say, the receipt is simple, and if the pickle we are now eating was made as you tell me, then it is undoubtedly excellently well made, for I never ate better."

"I propose that we spend this afternoon," said Nora, "collecting seeds. There are so many different flowers in the garden that are already

beginning to shed their seeds, and it is a thousand pities not to gather those that are dry, especially of Aunt's favourite flowers."

"You are quite right—let us go at once;" and thus saying the cousins took their hats and went out. A few little turns, and then they set to work, and had soon collected a number of neat little packets that they ticketed and tied all ready to hang up in the store-room. "By-the-by, there is an immense number of nasturtium seeds; let us gather and put them in vinegar," said Kathleen. "Mamma will be pleased to find them; they are an excellent substitute for capers, and every year I sow a great many on that account; they are also very pretty growing among the rocks, and smell so sweet."

"Quite true, Miss Everard; but look, there comes amiable Nancy to tell us tea is ready, and

I think we had better finish to-morrow, for it is already getting dusk."

Nothing more was done that evening, but the next morning several pickle bottles were filled early with nasturtium seeds, and the rest of their time they employed in cleaning the plain gilt frames of the glasses and pictures in their aunt and mother's bed-room, for, to their displeasure, they found them terribly marked by the flies.

They could not get any quite fresh butter without an atom of salt, so they took a little lard, and putting a wee bit at a time on their flannel they rubbed the frames until the spots disappeared, after which they wiped them thoroughly with a soft, clean cloth, and they looked all the better when they had finished.

"We have not worked in vain," they exclaimed joyfully, as they stood back to take a survey of

what they had cleaned. "How vexed we should have been if Aunt had come home and found them all dirty. Uncle Frank has never said a word about them, but I am sure he will perceive they are brighter than they were." "See if he does not, dear old Katie," said Nora Llewellyn, as she gave her cousin a hearty kiss.

For dinner they had a boiled leg of mutton, and Nora told Kathleen it seemed strange that, in England, they never eat horse-radish but with roast beef, whilst in Germany and Austria they eat it with many things. I have a good mind to make Uncle some Austrian horse-radish sauce to eat with his cold boiled mutton to-morrow," she said; "I believe he would like it."

"Oh, please do, Nora; it is my delight anyway, and papa's too."

The little housekeepers had soon dug themselves a superb root of the desired plant, and when they had washed and scraped off all the exterior, they grated it into a sauce-boat; then grated also over it a little lemon peel, added a spoonful of powdered sugar, a good dust of cayenne pepper, and an imperceptible quantity of salt; once mixed, they squeezed over the whole preparation the juice of the lemon. "We can add vinegar or not, as Uncle likes," Nora said, when it was finished.

Kathleen could not wait, but was obliged to taste it immediately.

"How it burns," she called out to Nora, "and how good it is; nevertheless, I am certain Papa will thank you for that sauce, even if it is hot and fiery. I should not like to have to eat much of it alone."

"Nobody asked you, my dear, and your tongue has suffered for its impatience."

"Anyhow, Nora, I like it much better your way than with cream, as many persons make it."

"So much the better; but what is the matter with Nancy? look how she is grimacing!"

"At your new fangled sauce, probably," said Kathleen.

"No, I'm not a-taking any notice of either of you; I feel quite bad, giddy, and a bad headache, and all at sixes and sevens," the old woman groaned out.

"There's plenty of boiling water," Nora exclaimed. "Do run out and gather a few leaves of sage, and I will make her a drop of sage tea —that will soon set her all right;" and no sooner had she swallowed a small cupful than she

declared herself better, and by dinner-time "all right."

The young girls were again enchanted that notwithstanding grumbling Nancy, they had proved their dictum true; and when Uncle Frank came home and listened to all the incidents of the day, he avowed he did not believe two more industrious little housekeepers could be found from one end of England to the other, besides which, "your knowledge is useful," he said, "my dear children, and does good to those who need it; I shall almost become wise listening to all the many things you know. Mamma thought you were skilful, but she did not know she was leaving me in the hands of two sprites of wisdom and elves of industry. You need not blush," he continued, "I love to give praise when it is due, and you know I

am forced to give my share and Nancy's also, for I doubt if she did not forget that part of the business, even though the sage tea produced a satisfactory effect."

They remained chattering away with Uncle Frank until aroused by the striking of the hall clock; they listened for nine, and were utterly astonished to hear it chime out ten.

"Bed-time come, and our pleasant little evening gone," said Uncle Frank, "you are happy children to know how it behoves us to employ the present, for we can never catch lost time, and are never so satisfied as when, at the end of the day, we can say—we have made the best of it. And now, good-night, God bless you both, my darlings—sleep well."

As they lay in bed the two young housekeepers certainly did not close their eyes until

they had cast one glance at that never-failing adviser of all mankind, the conscience—

"That curious glass that brings one's faults to light,
And makes one's virtues shine both strong and bright."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Good morning, Miss Norey," said old Nancy, the following day, as Miss Llewellyn entered the kitchen. "I'm mighty glad you be come down early, for I want you to give me something. I aint been able to sleep all night, I've had such an oppression I can't breathe at all; and when the weather is damp or stormy, it affects me ever so much. I'm sure I be asthmatic. I wish you could tell me of something to ease me."

"I should advise your taking a little more sage tea, three leaves to a cup of water; that must stand at least a quarter of an hour before you can drink it, and during that time I will go and make you a cigarette."

"Cigarette! Miss, do you want to kill me out and out?"

"No, Nancy, you have asked for my advice, and now you must follow it; you know quite well that I shall give you nothing that can harm you."

"I know that, Miss Norey; but don't be angry, you have such strange ideas, entirely *furren* to an old creature like me."

Nora did not stay to answer, but ran up to her room to get some uncut quill pens. She chose two nice ones, and cut them off about three inches long, after which she made a tiny hole in the round end to give a little air to the camphor she broke up into dust and inserted into her quills. In the end she had cut she introduced a rather larger piece to prevent the fine from falling out, after which she took

them down and told Nancy to keep one continually in her mouth when she either felt the oppression or the dampness of the atmosphere.

The old woman grinned over her cigarette, but took to it kindly when she found the good it did her.

"It takes all the breath out of me getting upstairs," she said.

"Well then, Nancy, go up backwards, or put your hand to your mouth and breathe only through your nose until you get to the top, and you will have much less difficulty, and no panting."

"She's got a rare good heart, and is wonderful clever, notwithstanding all her eccentricities," Nancy muttered, as Nora left the kitchen.

Kathleen was busy brushing her hair when her

cousin returned and told her Nancy was smoking downstairs. She could scarcely believe her ears, and ran to see if it were not a joke. She came back presently, mystified, but soon discovered that camphor had taken the place of tobacco, and the reason wherefore it had been recommended by Dr Nora.

Nora complained that she could not keep her hair in order. "It is most unruly, and do all I will I shall be obliged to use pomatum or oil again, for it is insupportably rough."

"Make some oil that I can prescribe for you, cousin Nora," Kathleen said. "Many persons prefer oil, and say it is better than pomade; the only trouble is, you must wait a little ere you can get what is necessary. Take some sweet almond oil, and pick into it a large

quantity of violets, that you leave to infuse for eight or ten days, after which you strain the flowers off, and your oil will be delicately perfumed and very refreshing for the hair. Mrs Holland gave me this receipt long ago, and I know many people who make use of it, and consider it one of the simplest, but one of the most natural and best hair oils they can possibly employ."

"I will wait patiently until violet time, and then I will do likewise," said Nora.

"Stay, I believe mamma has still a small bottle in her cupboard, and if I can find it, you shall try it and judge for yourself." The bottle was discovered, and the oil highly approved.

"And," replied Nora, "while we are full of the virtues of sweet almond oil, I had better tell you

that for delicate persons, who are subject to a feeling of suffocation and even pain as soon as they enter the sea, or fresh water, for a bath, they should rub their chests well all over with it, and they will no longer experience that instinctive dread that, in advance, spoils all their pleasure and even deters some people from bathing at all. Others who are susceptible of cold and shivering when they leave the water, should immediately take a little drop of rum—that will warm them sooner than anything they can take; and, above all, they should never neglect a warm foot bath the minute they get out of the sea."

"This latter is an easy matter for you when you are at Arromanches, for you can run from the sea into the house, dear Nora, in a second; but when we are at the seaside, we have only our

cabin, and are much too far off to indulge in foot-baths, &c."

"The more the pity," replied her cousin, "for you do not imagine how efficacious they are in many cases, and at any rate nothing prevents you from taking something as soon as you leave the sea, since you confess you are rather a shivering bather."

"That's quite true, and I shall adopt your system as far as I possibly can," returned Kathleen.

They were upstairs dressing for dinner when Nora discovered that her black silk afternoon dress was getting very shabby and spotted. "I cannot put it on to-day," she said, "and I really must clean it after dinner, for it is disreputable."

"With what do you do it?" asked Kathleen.

"I prefer some fig leaves to any other article, especially as there are some in the garden," replied Nora.

"I did not know they were of any use in cleaning black silk."

"Indeed, they are; I boil a large handful in two quarts of water until reduced to a pint, and with it I sponge the silk; and then you will soon see what an excellent reviver it is."

"I have often heard of black silk being well brushed, and the grease removed with ether, before washing it over with strong black coffee, and ironing it on the wrong side whilst it is still damp, but I had no idea that a decoction of fig leaves was good; now I shall always use it, as I can get the leaves and make a certain provision by bottling it. It is a pity there are so few fig trees in England."

"In France," returned Nora, "they are within the reach of every one."

Decidedly that afternoon was to be given up to cleaning and washing, for Kathleen remembered that her mother had some splendid white lace that required putting in order.

"I wish I could surprise her by getting it up like new, and storing it away carefully in her lace box," she said, "cannot you help me in some way, Nora?"

"Perhaps; but let us first see what it is like."

Kathleen soon came down with a quantity of Valenciennes and Mechlin lace that sadly required attention.

"We can prepare it while my decoction is boiling," returned Nora. "We will first iron it over quite lightly to get the creases well out, and then make a tidy little roll of it. That will do

well," she said, "as she finished, but we want a little piece of new linen sheeting, or of any kind, provided it is new linen."

"I can fetch you a little piece at once, for there's plenty in our piece-bag of every description," replied Kathleen, who soon brought the required stuff; "but what am I to do with it?"

"Make a tiny bag and sew your lace up in it, to be sure," said Nora.

"Please, Miss Llewellyn, that's done also. What are your orders now?"

"Why, steep the whole in a cup of olive oil for twenty-four hours; at the end of which time we will change it into some boiling soapy water for a quarter of an hour. Afterwards rinse it in lukewarm water; and, finally, give it a finishing bath in very, very clear starch water, and then pin it carefully out; by the time it is dry Aunt

Everard can boast of having some dirty lace made new, and of the purest white that it is possible to conceive."

"I am glad, and so much obliged to you, cousin Nora," said Kathleen a day or two afterwards, as she stored her lace safely away.

"I think I have reason to be pleased with my black silk also; do not you, Katie?" said Nora, as they went into the garden an hour later.

"Indeed I do. Your dress is quite a different one now; no one would know it for the same rusty black of the other day," answered her cousin.

"Young ladies! young ladies!" screamed Nancy from the far end of the garden—for the cousins were chattering so heartily, she could not make them hear—"pray, come to tea; master's a-waiting, and I've been a-looking for you everywhere."

Kathleen and Nora quickly obeyed the summons, for they did not like to keep Uncle Frank waiting, though assuredly he was far too kind to scold for so slight a cause; and, besides, Nancy always exaggerated when the least opportunity occurred for so doing.

"Where had you got to?" he asked, smiling. "I imagined you were at the other end of the village, to hear Nancy call. Decidedly, the poor old creature does not know her manners over well, to scream as she did; and I am afraid her lungs will be none the better for such stentorian exercise!"

The girls laughed, and Uncle Frank also; tea-time and the remainder of the evening slipped so quickly by, that both young ladies uttered an exclamation of astonishment when Nancy came in with the bedroom candles lit,

and said it was nearly half-past ten. Nora said playfully, as she went upstairs,—

"'For the light of the day we have nothing to pay,
For the light of the lamp we must pay, so we'll tramp.'"

"To our comfortable beds," said Kathleen.

"Good-night, Nancy!" exclaimed the cousins; for they never forgot that

"Good nature collects honey from every flower."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Nora came down the following morning it was rather late, so she asked Kathleen if, for a change, Uncle Frank would not probably like some poached eggs for breakfast.

"I am sure he would," said Kathleen; whereupon Nora put a saucepan of water on the fire to boil, with a little salt and a drop of vinegar. While it was heating, she made a large piece of well-buttered toast, that she put into the oven to keep warm while her eggs were cooking.

"Why did you put salt and vinegar in the water?" Kathleen asked.

"I put the salt that the eggs might be less tasteless and better cooked in water slightly

salted, and the vinegar to make them particularly white, and give them the inviting look they have."

"Another little lesson, Nora dear," said her cousin.

Mr Everard knew immediately whose cooking he was indebted to when he saw his eggs, and ate them with a gusto that expressed more than spoken thanks to Nora for her pains.

Out in the orchard that same morning, Mrs Kohler said she wished she could keep some of a very fine sort of apples perfectly fresh and well until her husband came back from China in the beginning of the month of February.

"That can be easily done, I think," said Nora timidly.

"And how, my dear child?" asked the interested lady.

"There are still lots of elder-berry flowers to be

had. You must get a quantity and dry them in the shade, and when your apples are fit to gather, you must take them carefully and store them in a deal box, of which the bottom is well covered with a thick layer of elder-flowers. You can put as many apples as the box will hold, provided they neither touch the bare box nor each other, and that each apple is perfectly buried in the flowers. Once filled, you close your box down tightly, and gum paper over all the cracks. This is certainly a great deal of trouble, but it is one of the surest ways of preserving your fruit perfectly," continued Nora.

"I thank you very, very much for telling me of it, dear," said Mrs Kohler, "and I do not care at all about the trouble. You know, perhaps, that the tree was planted by my husband's father, and he is never here to taste the fruit; that is

the reason I am so anxious to try and keep some. They are not real winter apples, and when I keep them to Christmas that is all I can do. This very afternoon Betsy shall go with me elder-flower gathering; and if you and your cousin have nothing to do, I need not tell you how glad I shall be of your kind help, for the flowers are nearly over, and it may rain to-morrow; the sky is threatening, and we shall be fortunate if it still holds fine to-day."

The cousins were very pleased to render service, and still more so to go with Mrs Kohler, for they were very fond of her.

They were fortunate in fine weather and in finding many more flowers than they could gather, and it was close upon tea-time when they returned home.

Mr Everard, as usual, was interested listening

to the account of the afternoon's excursion, and declared that he wished his young housekeepers would try and put him up a few fine Ribston pippins, that he might see how long they really would keep packed up in elder-flowers.

The cousins were delighted to do anything they could for Uncle Frank, and early the next morning they returned to their labour of elder-flower picking. They soon brought home a sufficient quantity, which they put in the shade to dry until the propitious moment arrived for using them.

They were busily engaged spreading them out, when poor Nora got something in her eye. She tried all sorts of things to get it out, but to no purpose; neither pulling down the eyelid, nor nose-blowing, nor bathing her eye in a glass of clear water, were of any avail. Nothing was visible, and yet her eye was terribly inflamed and

swollen, and was so painful that Uncle Frank was much distressed when he came home to dinner to find her with a bandage over it.

All at once an idea came into Kathleen's head. She was almost tempted to believe she owed it to good Lady Fay, though she never avowed so much. She ran hastily from the dining-room, leaving her father and cousin much astonished at her sudden exit, and a few seconds after returned, saying, "I know what will do you more good than anything, darling Nora, no matter whether it be dust, fly, or eyelash that is annoying you. Please take off your band, and have confidence in my skill."

"That I can, quite easily," answered her cousin; while Uncle Frank looked curiously to see what miracle she was about to work. She took from her pocket a grain of linseed, and putting it into

the corner of Nora's bad eye, she said, "Now try and have patience for a little time; the grain will soon swell and throw around it a mucilaginous substance that will serve as a trap to your invader, for it will draw it into its meshes, and we shall be able to remove the two together. You will see if my method is not good," she said proudly.

"Who taught you that dodge, Kate?" asked her father.

"It came from my store of treasures," she answered gaily.

Poor Nora did not eat much at dinner, for, like "Punch's Judy, her eye was so sore, she would if she could, but she couldn't swallow more."

When at last Kathleen allowed the compress to be removed, and drew out her linseed grain, that

had caught in its net a tiny wee bit of gravel, it was worth something to see her look of self-approbation as she exhibited her prize to her grateful cousin and pleased father.

"I have not finished my operation yet," she exclaimed, as she drew from her pocket a mysterious little bottle, and counted ten drops into a glass of water, bidding Nora bathe her eye to remove the inflammation.

"My curiosity is aroused again now, and I must know what eye-water you are recommending there, my love," said her father.

"A simple one, dear father, for reducing inflammation. Mamma and I gathered this spring a number of blue corn-flowers. We picked out the petals, infused them in some of our best old eau-de-vie, and it is a few drops of this famous elixir that I have given to Nora, who must bathe her

eye for ten minutes with it now and on going to bed, and again to-morrow night and morning if there still remain the tiniest inflammation."

"I am truly delighted, my dear child, that you have had it in your power to relieve poor Nora, for nothing causes a more acute suffering than anything in the eye." Thus saying, Mr Everard left the little girls, and told them to be sure and not do anything that would tire or fatigue the sight.

It was a lovely afternoon, the storm that was threatening had passed further on, when the two cousins went out to enjoy a little stroll in the garden. Chance led them near the poultry yard, where they found two cocks fighting most terribly. They separated them several times, but all to no purpose. The adverse parties must have had some good reason for waging such outrageous warfare against one another.

"Had we not better take one of them out of the yard?" said Kathleen; "the little one gets the worst of it, and yet he seems the more enraged of the two."

"Let us go and get a piece of Thomas's favourite garlic and smash it; afterwards, if we can catch the two gentlemen, we will soon put an end to their quarrel, let it be ever so grievous."

The two housekeepers had a famous chase and a famous laugh ere they captured the two unruly members of the poultry yard. They succeeded, however, at last, and soon quieted their riotous propensities by nointing their combs with a little of the garlic.

"They will not fight again in a hurry, I'm sure," said Nora, as the two poor birds scuttled away in contrary directions; and truly enough no more cock-fighting took place that afternoon,

nor, indeed, if we believe Nancy's version, did they ever fight again.

Uncle Frank did not come home to tea, so the young ladies retired to their room early, to find that

"No bed is so downy as that on which a contented spirit reposes."

CHAPTER XV.

THE preceding day Uncle Frank had asked Nora if she could not make him a pot-au-feu for his dinner, so she had taken the precaution of ordering from the butcher four to five pounds of beef cut from the round.

Coming down early, and assured that the boiler was perfectly clean and free from all grease, she put her beef into it, well tied round with string, and added about four quarts of water and a sufficient quantity of salt to make it palatable. Putting it on the fire, she left it till it began to boil, after which she skimmed it carefully until no more froth rose to the surface. In the meantime she had washed and prepared four or five

carrots, three small turnips, a bunch of six or seven leeks, a little piece of celery, a parsnip, and two or three onions with a couple of cloves stuck in them, all of which she put into her soup, and then set her boiler on one side of the hob to boil quite gently until dinner time, a space of four hours.

"Some persons," said she to Kathleen, who stood watching her, "put in also a tiny cabbage, but this sours the bouillon much quicker if you desire to keep it a day or two. It is certainly very nice, but I prefer it without. I do not either colour my soup, though half the cooks put in burnt sugar, or balls of the same, that every grocer sells in France. To-day we will eat our soup poured boiling, or to bread cut very, very finely, and to-morrow we can boil some vermicelli in it for a change."

When the bouillon is cold and the grease taken off it, nothing is pleasanter to drink.

For the second day, another way that is also excellent, is to put two tablespoonfuls of flower into a cup, with two eggs, beating the whole until a thick cream is formed, then throw it into the bouillon whilst boiling, and stir well all the time, but the soup must be taken from the fire the moment the cream is poured into it. Indeed, it is safer to take the precaution to move the boiling saucepan from the fire for this operation. The number of eggs and the quantity of paste required depend upon the supply of soup to be prepared.

It was within half-an-hour of dinner time when Uncle Frank appeared, and called out, "Nora, my love, I told my old friend, Mr Witherington, that you were making me a pot-au-feu for dinner,

and he insisted on coming home with me to have some of it."

"I am very glad, Uncle, but we have not much to give him, for pot-au-feu is a homely dinner; but I daresay Kathleen and I can find out some little thing or other to make our table more presentable."

"We shall both be quite satisfied, shall we not, Mr Witherington, with whatever our housekeepers set us down to, provided the pot-au-feu be good?"

"I don't care for anything else," said the good-natured old gentleman.

"Look here, Nora darling, there is still a good bit of cold fowl; supposing you make us one of your delicious salads with it."

"So I will. Kathleen, run and fetch a nice, white lettuce, with some chives and tiny scallions."

No sooner said than done. She cut her

lettuce up pretty fine, put her little bits of fowl over it, arranging the whole quite prettily, after which she made a mayonnaise sauce all ready to pour over it when it should come to table.

"The worst of all is," she exclaimed, "we have no pastry, no pudding, and 'no nothing' to follow. I could have made some fried apple puffs, but they will take too long now. There is but one way of getting out of our scrape; I must make some excuse to get away from table for a few minutes while the gentlemen are eating their salad, and I will soon manufacture a sweet dish."

The clock struck two, as Nora, the French cook, poured some of the boiling bouillon (from which she had taken the greater part of the grease) over her finely-cut bread in the soup tureen, saying to Nancy, "Let it soak, with the

cover closely over it, while I wash my hands and smooth my hair."

Five minutes later and the soup was on the table, and the two gentlemen were proclaiming it quite to their idea of good French bouillon. The beef came in smoking and nicely garnished with double parsley, the vegetables on a dish by themselves, although accompanied by their sisters in the form of mealy potatoes. The mustard was fresh, and the whole of Nora's labours met with high approval.

The salad was on the table, and found to be excellent, when Nora got herself called out of the room by Nancy. Her frying-pan was in excellent order, her six eggs well beaten, with some sugar in them, and her omelette was made in a few seconds; then covered in powdered sugar and drowned in rum (Nora would have preferred

kirsch, but she had not any), she set fire to her omelette, and sent it flaming into the dining-room, where it was received with cries of welcome, as it perfectly finished up the French dinner Mr Everard was delighted to offer to his old friend, and still more so, prepared as it had been, entirely by his skilful little housekeepers.

In the afternoon Nora and Kathleen went out into the fields; and when they came home, they put five or six tufts of the flowers of St John's wort they had found into a quart of old brandy, and left it to infuse for a month, "when it was to be carefully strained," Nora said, "and used in case of cramp in the stomach, a remedy that she had often seen applied, and always with success." The two girls had gathered more of the flowers than they required, and so, instead of throwing them away,

they put them into some olive oil; a good liniment being so made for slight ailments, such as scratches, burns, cuts, and bites.

The sun had been frightfully hot, and when Kathleen went upstairs and saw herself in the glass, she was quite taken aback; her face was positively blistered, and she could not keep from laughing as she rushed down to find Nora, calling out, "Nora, Nora, do come and look at me. My poor face is peeling. You must find something to cure me, or I shall be hideous and as red as a lobster."

Nora teased her, by telling her she would be obliged to take to veils in future, if she had such a very delicate skin that she could not go out and affront Mr Phœbus without fearing his fiery rays. "Never mind, darling, though," she added kindly, "we will discover some means or other of getting

you back your own dear old face for to-morrow; and as Uncle is not coming home to tea, he will know nothing of your momentary disfigurement."

That night, when they went up to bed, Nora rubbed poor Kathleen's face all over with glycerine, and then powdered it with starch flour. "Nothing is so good for irritation of any kind," she said. "Some people use tallow instead of glycerine, but it disgusts me—I cannot touch it, the smell alone makes me ill, so I substitute glycerine or cucumber pomade for it, and both the one and the other do equally well. Starch powder is a fine thing, and one ought never to be without it. It is preferable to the finest toilet powder, I believe, and so used poor Mamma; at any rate, glycerine and starchpowder often render immense service to people on arriving at

the sea-side, as also does lemon juice, for the face."

When they came downstairs the next day, an old woman was at the door selling water cress.

"We will take some for breakfast," said Kathleen; "it is so good for the blood." "And if you like," added Nora, "we will make some water-cress soup; it is splendid for liver complaints, and Nancy always says she is so afflicted."

"How do you make it?" asked Kathleen.

"I cook five or six potatoes, that I pass back into their water through a colander. As soon as they begin to go to pieces, I add some salt and a large piece of very fresh butter. Once prepared so far, I wash most carefully two or three bunches of water cress, and collect them by the stalks; after which I cut them up very, very

finely (taking care not to use the coarsest pieces of the stalk) and put them in to boil gently for an hour, with my potatoes. The soup of itself is thick enough not to require bread. I should recommend a good plate of it for breakfast very often, to those who suffer from a sluggish liver."

"We will give some to Papa. He often says he has liver complaint; and if it does him no good, it can do him no harm," said his daughter, laughing.

"And I am sure it will do him a great deal of good. By-the-by I must not forget to send the receipt of water-cress soup to Uncle Will; he can take it either for dinner or breakfast, and most certainly he will not find it too disagreeable a remedy to try. I will not vouch for its curing him, but I will answer for its being very beneficial in most cases."

Bed-time came once more, and poor Kathleen underwent her greasing and powder operation until she declared she should make a capital clown.

"Besides," said Nora, "pride feels no pain, and without having more than is necessary, you would not like to appear in society as a 'young red Indian,' just landed, should you, darling?"

The girls laughed and talked until it was quite late. Much longer than usual in getting into bed, they heard Uncle Frank come home ere they knelt down and said their prayers; then jumped into their comfortable beds, said good-night to each other, and turned over for a sound sleep. They knew no trouble and no anxiety as yet, but they had early been taught, that if

> "Sorrow come and the earth be dark,
> They had only to keep their eye on Heaven."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next morning the two little girls were in the pantry, when Kathleen exclaimed, "I do wish Nancy would wash these shelves, tables, and the floor a little better than she does; they are a real disgrace. I must tell her to get some fuller's earth and ox-gall, and boil them together, and scrub the whole place down—that at least will clean it properly."

"No, dear Kathleen, say nothing about it; you know how she grumbles when we tell her it is dirty. Just before Aunt comes home we will do it ourselves, to set her an example. The floor is not very large, and two or three shelves and tables will amuse us to scrub. The first washing-

day we will take care that Nancy puts us on one side some nice suds. We will warm them and then scrub our pantry properly. Plenty of black soap and a little sand scour marvellously, the only thing is to wash well down after with clean water, that no sand may remain; and beside, after all, if any remains, you have only to wait till your floor is perfectly dry, and then sweep it carefully over with a hair brush. The principal thing required, in almost all cleaning performances, is elbow-grease, and, as a rule, that costs too much for the English servants to use it freely —at least they imagine so, for they are always adverse to squandering it. You and I, Kathleen, can afford, and will even be glad to use a large quantity of it, for Aunt Everard will amply repay us by her pleasure on seeing her pantry look 'lovely,' as far as cleanliness goes."

The young ladies were called from their reflections by Nancy, who came to tell them Mrs Bates was in the dining-room, and wished to speak to them.

"Tell her we will be there directly, Nancy," said Kathleen. A minute to put themselves straight, and they ran off quickly to see the old lady in question, who was a distant relation of Mrs Everard's.

"I have come to ask you, my dear children, if you will ride with me to Bromley, to know how Mrs Tasselle's boy is; he had such a bad cold the other evening when I was there, that he quite distressed me. We shall be back long before dinner time, and I feel almost inclined to spend the rest of the day with you. I want to see your father, and I am longing to hear you tell me that Edgar is better also."

The young girls were delighted to go with Mrs Bates, and still more so that she was to spend the day with them. As they ran upstairs to put on their hats, Nora said, "What a kind, benevolent face she has, and what splendid white hair; so pure and lovely it looks, so different from Mrs Drab's dirty, yellowish looking meshes."

"Do you know how she makes them of that exquisite white?" asked Kathleen.

"Indeed, I do not; I always believed them natural."

"So they are; what she does is certainly not from coquetry. She rubs her head well once a week with the finest wheat flour, and then brushes it most carefully; not only does the flour clean the head, but it keeps the hair in excellent order, and makes it look so beautiful."

"I wish I was old enough to do likewise."

said Nora. "I won't wait to become grey-headed before I adopt her plan, and make a very respectable-looking old lady of myself. I do so love white hair," she continued, in her ecstasy of admiration.

Kathleen and Nora enjoyed their drive thoroughly. They found Mrs Tasselle a charming woman, with a large family of dear little children. The boy Mrs Bates went especially to see was better, but his mother said he suffered frightfully with chapped hands and chilblains in winter, and she really did not know what to do for them; she had tried a host of remedies, and all without success.

Nora asked very timidly if she had ever heard of lukewarm claret being a capital preventive! She said no; and Nora told her if she would make her little boy soak his hands and feet every

day, for a good long time, in warm ordinary claret, he would neither suffer with chaps nor chilblains. "The remedy must be commenced as soon as ever the least sign of either of the above named ailments shows itself," she said.

Mrs Tasselle thanked her warmly, and declared she would not fail to make use of so simple a receipt for so great an evil.

When they got home it was nearly dinner time, and there were only some mutton chops and the cold pot-au-feu beef in the house. So Nora cut some slices of the beef and put them into a saucepan with a piece of butter, a quantity of little new onions, a drop of bouillon, and the flesh of several tomatoes, from which she had taken off the skin and the seeds; she added a little bouquet of thyme, bay, and parsley, and let the whole stew until the onions were done, when it was served

on a hot dish, and found to be to the liking both of Mrs Bates and Mr Everard.

The old lady listened with great pleasure to Uncle Frank's glowing account of his little housekeepers, and when in the afternoon he asked them what they were going to be busy about, Kathleen said, "They had collected some fresh eggs and were going to conserve them for winter."

"We must not neglect them," added Nora; "time is already getting on, and the best time to do them is from the middle of August to the beginning of September."

Mrs Bates and Uncle Frank insisted on coming to learn their system, and found the young ladies very busy dipping their eggs in a strong solution of gum and water, after which they stowed them carefully in a box filled with charcoal dust.

"They will not be white eggs when they come out of there," laughed Uncle Frank.

"No, Papa," answered Kathleen, "but it will not be difficult to restore them to their original whiteness by washing them."

"That's true," said Mr Everard, as he led the old lady back to the drawing-room.

"It is a pity, Frank, more girls are not brought up like those," she returned; "they are a credit to themselves and their parents."

"Nora is really wonderful," said Mr Everard, "with all her knowledge; and Kathleen is fortunate in having her for a companion, for the poor child does all she can to learn from her cousin."

"And she seems to have succeeded remarkably well," replied the kind old lady.

The following day for dinner, Nora, knowing

her Uncle to be fond of vegetables, made him a dish that pleased him extremely. She mashed some boiled potatoes very finely and passed them through a colander, then mixed with them a good bit of butter and a little milk and the salt necessary. She had also prepared some spinach, that underwent the same operation, excepting that she mixed it with some good roast meat gravy instead of milk; she did not either omit the butter, but when both her vegetables were ready she took a mould and put a layer of one and a layer of the other until she filled it, when she placed it in a saucepan of boiling water, and let it simmer until it was served very hot. It turned out a very pretty dish, a very nice dish, and a very satisfactory one on all accounts. It was eaten with a piece of roast beef, and turned out to be a great improve-

ment. Cold cabbage, cut very fine, may be mixed with meat gravy, and used instead of spinach.

"Do you like green pea soup?" Nora asked her Uncle at dinner that day.

"Indeed I do," he replied.

"Well, then, I will give you some for dinner to-morrow," she said, and she kept her word.

She cooked some green peas, about a quart, in some boiling water and salt, with a tiny bit of mint; when done she passed them with her *pestle* through the colander into the water she had taken them from, added a large piece of butter and a quart of milk, that she left in full ebullition for five minutes, while she broke the yolks of two eggs into her tureen, and fried some tiny square pieces of bread in butter until they were of a light brown, when she put them into

her soup, and poured the whole on to her yolks, taking care to stir the whole time.

"This," she said, "is what the French would call a 'soupe maigre.' You must tell me, Uncle, if you like it as well as if it were made with meat soup?"

"I do, and a great deal better," he said. "I do not believe I have ever eaten any soup more to my taste."

As usual Nora was delighted, and she certainly was fortunate in succeeding in everything she undertook; but then it must be allowed she did whatever she had to do with such entire good-will, and threw her heart so entirely into her work, that she deserved recompense, and she got it, for that very evening Mr Witherington sent up a little box directed to "the Marvellous Little Housekeepers," who wondered whatever it could

contain, and were nearly overcome with joy when they each received a dear little Geneva watch, "a souvenir," wrote the kind old gentleman, "of his French dinner, and of the skilful and willing little hands that had prepared it."

That was indeed a joyful surprise, and when they had said good-night, and kissed Uncle Frank, they ran upstairs as merry as two crickets, quite sure that—

"It is always well to look on the bright side of things,"

especially when these latter are two lovely little watches, and a recompense for

"Virtue that reaps its own reward and brings many others with it."

CHAPTER XIV.

As Kathleen Everard and Nora Llewellyn were going down to the village one morning, they met foreman Hall and his dog with a chicken tied to its neck. The poor animal looked none of the happiest; on the contrary, he hung his tail and sneaked past the young ladies, instead of bounding forward for his usual caress.

"Good morning," said the old man. "I see you are wondering what's amiss with Dingo."

"We should like to know why you have tied that poor wretched-looking chicken to his throat?" asked Kathleen.

"The reason is simple enough," exclaimed Hall. "I can't stop him from chasing and

killing fowls in Mr Cole's farm-yard. I've beaten him and done everything short of killing him, and yesterday he was up to his evil ways again, and worried to death the poor little pullet he's a-wearing, much to his shame and annoyance. I met Mr Russell down yonder, and says he, Hall, if you want to cure your dog of killing fowls you have only to tie the first he slaughters on his neck for four or five days; I warrant he will not care to chase any more of the same game, when once he has had to wear it. And true enough," Hall went on, "he seems awfully sheepish and wicked now he's obliged to keep company with his victim."

"But can he not get it off?" said Nora.

"He scratches pretty tidily, but he can only pull the feathers off and tear the fowl; it is so tied that he can't half get at it. This is his

second day of punishment, and you see, Miss, he has not done much harm to the pullet yet awhile." So saying Kathleen and Nora went on, laughing at poor Dingo's disgrace, that they considered perfectly merited. Nora told her cousin that Mr James of Lilley Hoo had a dog that was a terrible thief for eggs, and it was only when he had put a pretty hot one in its mouth that he cured it of stealing them.

At dinner time that same day Nancy asked Mr Llewellyn if he had heard that Tom Muggleton, the half-cracked lad at the Brewery, was very ill with a severe attack of bronchitis.

"You know, Sir," she continued, "he's a sort of cousin of mine, as his and my mother were cousins, and notwithstanding his poor weak intellect, I feel anxious about him; and I'd be very glad if you would let me go and see him this afternoon.

Indeed, I think I'd best ask Dr Patrick to go and look at him."

"If you are sure he has bronchitis, Nancy, I will tell you what to do for him. I suppose you have some pure beef dripping from our joint of to-day. You must take it to Tom and make him rub some well into his chest by the fire before getting into bed; then cut a brown paper shield, that you apply over the grease, taking great care to make him keep his chest well covered. There is an old blanket upstairs, and this afternoon Nora and I will cut it into chest preservers that you can give him to wear over the brown paper," said Kathleen. "Besides which, you can make him drink from time to time a little mallow-flower tea with a good teaspoonful of syrup of tolu in it. I will give you some dried mallow flowers and a little bottle of the syrup of

tolu, so that I do not think you will require Dr Patrick's skill. Nothing will ease the poor lad quicker than the beef dripping."

"Thank you, Miss Kate," said old Nancy, as she went from the room.

"That's right, Katie dear," exclaimed her father, "I am delighted to see you are profiting by Nora's lessons; but how came you to have mallow flowers by you?"

"Because we picked a great quantity soon after Nora's arrival, and dried them. She told me how good they were, so we 'made hay while the sun shone.'"

"I am glad to hear you say so, for by so doing you may be ministering children," said Mr Everard, "in many cases."

"The other day, Uncle, Mrs Kohler told us of a gentleman in a consumption, who was given

over by all the best doctors in Europe and America. He went home, as he, and everyone else believed, to die at San Francisco; instead of which, an old woman happened to meet him, and told him, that if every morning he would swallow two or three tablespoonfuls of pure warm goose grease, and eat it in every possible way, on bread, have his vegetables cooked with it, etc., etc., she was certain he would soon be perfectly well. He grimaced a little at the idea first of all, but he had such a desire to live that he consoled himself with the thought that, after all, warm goose grease was less offensive to swallow than cod-liver oil; and so he tried it. He tried it once, twice, thrice; it went down pretty well, and disgusted him less than he imagined, besides which, strange to say, his hacking cough was not so troublesome. A little amelioration encouraged

him to continue, and in less than six months, if he had told a stranger he had been abandoned by all the physicians, they would have laughed in his face, so strong and so well he looked and felt. The worst of the affair was, he and goose grease had become such firm friends that they never separated, and met regularly at breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper. He persuaded all his friends to partake of his favourite aliment, and assuredly, when he offered them a dish of spinach prepared with it, they all avowed it excellent, and even the most prejudiced were obliged to allow it was good.

Uncle Frank was a most attentive listener to his little housekeepers, and nothing pleased him better than to sit and smoke his cigar after dinner while they talked to him of the many receipts of which they had heard. All three

were chattering away gaily when Nancy came in to tell them that Susan Fox had come to ask if Mr Everard could not give her something for her nephew, Will Parrot, who had that very morning slipped down with a hurdle and very badly grazed his arm.

"Eh! eh! my dears," said Uncle Frank, "it is now you must come to my rescue, for I don't know what to order. I dare say Will was not sober when he fell, for he often takes more than is good for him."

"He had better bathe his arm with some sugared claret, I should think," said Nora; "it is firstrate for healing, provided there is plenty of sugar in it."

"Well, Nancy, then you can give a bottle of claret and some sugar to Susan, but tell her to take care that Will does not use it internally

instead of externally. Stay," said Mr Everard, "we will stick a blue label with 'poison' on the bottle, so that he may not be tempted above his strength."

The young girls and Nancy enjoyed the joke extremely, and the bottle, fully prepared with sugar, was given to the unsuspecting Susan without any other recommendation than to put it in safety so that no accident should happen.

The remedy turned out to be good, for Will was soon at work again. The precaution also had proved necessary, for several times Will felt tempted to taste "the stuff," and would certainly have done so if that threatening "poison" had not been there to hinder him.

"Here comes fat old Mary Farmhill, with a basket of oranges, I declare!" exclaimed Kathleen, looking out of the window; "she will

expect us to buy some, and they are still as sour as verjuice—the idea of them makes me shudder."

"Take a dozen all the same, Katie dear," said her father.

"We can eat them by plunging them in hot water for a minute before eating them, or we can make a hole in the top of them and fill them with powdered sugar," said Nora. "She is industrious and tries hard to gain her living, poor old creature, notwithstanding her infirmity, for it is one to be as fat as she is."

In the evening Uncle Frank went out for a stroll, but was overtaken by a very heavy thunderstorm. They sat up for him, and when he came home wet through they had prepared a hot foot-bath for his immediate use. They even made him

bathe his hands in warm water, "for it is incontestable," Nora said, "that if people would bathe their feet and hands in warm water before going to bed, when they have been exposed to damp and cold during the day, they would, in nine cases out of ten, avoid illnesses that too frequently terminate fatally."

"I quite believe that," said Uncle Frank. "And now, my dear children, we will have supper and then go to bed; it is late, and I cannot afford to have my skilful little housekeepers laid up." He then kissed and thanked them for their kind attention to him, and bade them good-night, with the assured conviction that "A good child is the brightest ray in the sunshine of a parent's heart, especially," he murmured to himself, "when they are like those two dear children;

both Edgar and myself have great reason to be thankful."

Kathleen and Nora's maxim seemed to be—

"Sweet sleep and happy waking are the best incentives to prayers that go straight to heaven."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE little girls were up betimes, for Mrs Everard would be home the following day, and they had many things to do.

Their first occupation was to clean all the silver, and they were quite determined to spare no pains over it, provided it would look like new. Coffee-pots, teapots, candlesticks, covers, milk and cream jugs, cruets, and everything in silver and electro-plate had to undergo a thorough renovation.

The plate powder was all prepared, and with aprons up to their chins they were ready to commence, when a scream from the garden called them from their work. Thomas, the gardener, was

lying struggling and frothing on the ground in an epileptic fit. Nancy was by, thoroughly scared, not knowing what to do when Kathleen and Nora arrived; they too were terrified, but Nora did not lose her presence of mind, for, running back to the house she seized a black silk handkerchief and spread it over the patient's face. In a minute he grew calm, and was very soon all right again.

They were marvellously astonished to see such magic cure in a black silk handkerchief; still it is a fact that it almost always succeeds immediately in calming an attack of epilepsy.

"Black silk, you know," said Nora afterwards, "has more virtues than one. In case of violent thunderstorms it is an excellent non-conductor of electricity, a small piece suffices; and I remember that a schoolmaster in the south of France had in

a fearful thunderstorm distributed little silk neckties to all the boys when the lightning struck and literally reft open the end of the schoolroom without harming one of the ninety children in it."

"Well, I declare, Miss Norey, I am very sorry you be obliged to leave us so soon. You was as good as a magician, and knew some cures for every one's ill. I shall feel very lonesome when you and Miss Kate goes, though I am very glad missus is coming home again: the house don't seem nice without her."

At length the young girls again sat down to their silver cleaning. The powder they employed was composed as follows :—

Equal quantities of cream of tartar and whitening, with half the same quantity of powdered alum, the whole made into a thin paste with a little

water. Into this preparation Kathleen and Nora dipped their leathers and flannels, and rubbed each object with care until sufficiently bright, when, washing them in clean warm water, and drying thoroughly, they put them back into their places shining to their hearts' content.

That day they were to have a dish of salsify for dinner, served in white sauce, but Nancy never could manage it properly. They always turned black when she scraped them, and that simply because she forgot, Nora said, "to throw each one as she scraped it into a basin of cold water with a little vinegar in it."

After dinner they determined to plant a number of geranium cuttings. "They are much more likely to succeed now than later," said Kathleen, "but I must destroy all the earth-worms that are in the mould, or they will speedily kill my flowers.

Will you fetch me the watering-can, while I run in to get a little powdered mustard?"

Nora brought the can, and she threw into it a teaspoonful of mustard, then filled it with water, and watered her flowers, quite sure that from henceforth no worms would live in the soil.

"Are you not afraid the mustard will harm your flowers, dear?"

"Not in the least. I always water them so the first time after having planted them, and you see how well they generally succeed, for Thomas does not know much about flowers, and occupies himself very little with them."

"Nancy, Nancy," screamed Kathleen, "there goes an ice cart. Do, pray, go and persuade the man to sell us a little; he will not refuse you."

"I don't know so much," grumbled the old

woman. Kathleen, however, was right, for she soon came back with a large piece, that was the delight of the busy gardeners. They carried it into the house, and there broke themselves each a bit to put into a glass of claret and water.

"How easily you break it, Nora, with a strong pin only, I declare."

"Yes, but I tap the head of the pin gently, as you see. I always used to break it like that when poor mamma was ill."

They were soon off again for a run and a look round (as Nora expressed it), to see if there were anything new to be done or found. They had not gone far ere they stopped to gather a good bouquet of tansy, that they discovered growing in a corner.

"Let's go and put it into old Don's kennel; it will soon kill all his living companions that

annoy us each time we play with him. Thomas might put a few fir shavings into his kennel from time to time also. Either tansy or fresh fir shavings will have the desired effect, and we shall not suffer from a closer contact with our poor faithful old dog," said Kathleen.

"We had almost forgotten one thing, and that is, to fill Aunt's pillow again with fresh dried hops, for if we do not, she will not sleep when she comes home, and you know how tired and ill she is when she has not passed a good night."

"Thank you for remembering it, dear Nora. We will go and do it at once. What a good thing it is that a hop pillow makes people sleep, and that without any danger or inconvenience like the greater part of opiate remedies."

"Yes, indeed, it is. Aunt puts a feather pillow over her hop one, does she not?"

"Oh, yes, she always has a second one."

"Look at that great cobweb, Kathleen. It would be useful in America, if what they say is true; and, indeed, a lady who had lived there many years in the United States, told me that, as a remedy in ague, many people swallowed cobwebs rolled into pills, and declared it cured them more effectively than anything else. There, also, they think a great deal of blackberries, and in the time of the civil war, when cholera was raging in the hospitals, the ladies of the different towns used to go out on blackberrying excursions, and bring home immense quantities, that were found of great benefit to the poor choleric soldiers. Blackberry syrup is an excellent thing in cases of cold and sore throat also," said Nora.

After tea the two cousins remained in the garden till quite late, and on going in Kathleen

asked Nora "if she would not enjoy a cup of warm milk before going to bed?"

"Indeed, I should," answered Nora, "though I do not digest it as easily as most people. I am very fond of a glass of milk, but I do not think it quite suits me, and I do not know what I should do if ordered to drink it continually, as some sick persons are."

"I can tell you what I would advise you to do in that case, Miss Llewellyn," laughed Kathleen. "You would only have to boil two or three leaves of mint in it to render it quite easy of digestion, and take away the repugnance that many persons have to hot milk."

"Ah! ah! is it not more difficult than that?" said Nora; "then I shall very often advise it for those who cannot tolerate it otherwise."

The young housekeepers took their milk, and

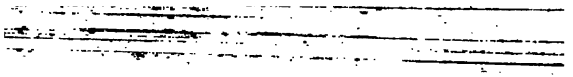
then went to find Uncle Frank, to wish him good-night. He was in his study, but laid aside his writing when they entered.

"So this is our last good-night," he said. "To-morrow I shall have no clever and kind, thoughtful little housekeepers to kiss and thank for the pains they have taken to do good to me, and all those around them. But," he continued, "I am not to be pitied, since mamma will be at home, and poor Uncle Edgar will be enchanted to have you with him. I need not tell either of you to take great care of him, and pay attention to his tiniest wants. All I can say is this, make haste and get him quite well, so that we may have you all three back for a long visit, and a little excursion that I am going to offer you both to the Isle of Wight as a recompense for the industry, perseverance, and skill you have displayed throughout your housekeeping

labours. God bless you, dear children," he said, kissing them. "Go on as you have begun, and you will make light hearts around you, and store up a treasure of blessings for yourselves that no riches can buy."

Kathleen and Nora left their father and uncle, their eyes swelling with tears; but they were bright, happy tears, and, with the assurance that goodness brings its own reward, they said their prayers with grateful hearts, and were soon in bed and asleep. Unconsciously those little girls were spreading a holy and gentle influence around them,

They were sure of a good reward, for the road in which they walked was honourable and virtuous."



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